Alan Stephenson

Esther Roberts October 1811

From Mrs E Bartlett

THE COMPLETE

DUTY OF MAN;

OR, A SYSTEM OF

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL *CHRISTIANITY.*

TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED,

FORMS OF PRAYER

AND

OFFICES OF DEVOTION,

designed for the Use of Families and private Persons:

adapted to the principal Subjects of the ensuing Treatise.

BY

THE REVEREND HENRY VENN, A.M.

formerly Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge; Rector of Yelling in Huntingdonshire; and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Earl of Buchan.

THE SEVENTH EDITION, CAREFULLY REVISED AND CORRECTED.

BATH

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TO THE FIFTH EDITION.

IT is proper to inform the Reader, that this Work has already passed through four editions. The first and second were nearly similar to each other, except that the latter was carefully corrected; but, in the third edition, very considerable alterations were introduced by the author. The style, at the request of some friends who thought it too prolix and not sufficiently simple, was so altered as to appear in some instances like an abridgement.—It rarely happens that a person is able to alter, without injury, his peculiar style. In endeavouring to do this, the author has been thought by many to diminish the richness, the harmony, and the dignity of his composition.

The present edition therefore has been printed from the second. The editor has however improved it by a careful collation with the third, and by the adoption of some of the alterations in it. He has also ventured to make a few corrections in the style *himself; a liberty which he should not have presumed to take, had not his relation to the author given him a sort of literary property in his works, and had not his intention been sanction-*

ed by the express approbation of the author, when he was too infirm to undertake it himself.

The following alterations have also been made.

A different division into chapters *has been adopted.*

The first edition was divided into fourteen chapters, one of which was intended to be read on the Sunday evening to the family; but as there was a general complaint that the length of the chapters required more time than could be usually spared in families, a division into fifty-two chapters, corresponding with the number of Sundays in the year, was made in the third edition. The subjects were however by this arrangement extremely broken, and the worship was in many instances rendered too short; a middle plan of division has been therefore adopted by the editor, and it is hoped that the work will now be more convenient as a Companion to Family Worship on the Lord's-Day Evening.

The Prayers also, in this edition, instead of being intermingled with the chapters, are placed together *at the end of the work: being upon various and important subjects, they may thus serve, it is presumed, as a very useful Manual of Family Devotion.*

PREFACE.

WHATEVER disputes may have been raised concerning the nature of *saving Faith*, it is allowed on all hands to be one of the most important Christian virtues, and essential to the character of a Christian.

I am ready to profess that in conformity with the great lights of the primitive church, of our own church, and all the protestant ones, at the Reformation, and long after,* I understand by it *a dependence upon the righteousness and death of Christ, as a full satisfaction to the justice of God for the sin of the world, in the breach of his law; and the sole ground of our acceptance to the reward of eternal life.* And if any explanation of this point, now so very offensive to many, should be demanded, the following is humbly submitted to consideration.

Sin is the transgression of the law of the most high God; which law, the moment it is broken,

* See the Confessions of Faith of all the Reformed Churches.

subjects us to its penalty. Of this the punishment of the first sin committed by the first man is a most memorable instance, and stands in the front of the Bible as a perpetual and most important lesson of instruction to mankind, in a point of which they would otherwise have been ignorant; and which, notwithstanding the solemn manner in which it is related, many are very apt to overlook. This fact ought to be particularly remarked, as designed to give us a clear insight into the nature of God, and the nature of sin; and as being the key to all the subsequent discoveries of Scripture. For if the sin of eating the forbidden fruit cannot be pardoned, though its punishment was so fatal in its consequences, and involved in them the whole race of Adam, it may fairly be presumed that sin must in all cases wear the same appearance in the eyes of an unchangeable God. *He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:* Every sin therefore, as an act of disobedience and rebellion against him, must be the object of his displeasure at all times, and will for ever separate from him every soul of man, in whom it is found unpardoned.

If you are unwilling to admit this account of the nature of sin, and of the nature of God, as being contrary to the idea you have framed of him, and derogatory as you suppose to his per-

fections, it is then incumbent on you to prove, in what age or period of the world, under what dispensation, or new discovery of the will of God, and in what part of Scripture you find it recorded, that God has revoked the decree against sin, and made a change in the law given to man at his creation, of life upon obedience, and death in case of transgression. The Scripture, on the contrary, in perfect harmony with itself, acquaints us, that at the second promulgation of the law, God appeared in the same majesty and holiness, and with the same denunciation of wrath against sinners, as he did at the beginning: *Cursed is every one that continueth not in* ALL *things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.* On which, let it be observed, that as more than *temporal death* was necessarily implied in the threatening and curse to the *Jews;* because that was unavoidably the doom of all mankind, whether they obeyed or not: so it naturally suggests to us, that the *first* threatening, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,* was of the same extent with the second, and its meaning precisely determined by it. In this second sentence, then, there is no relaxation of the first; no contrary declaration concerning the case of offenders, nor the least intimation of any change in the will of

God with respect to sin. Indeed it would be strange if there should be any; such a variation or inconsistency in the character of God as given by himself, would be an argument of much greater force against the truth of the Bible than any yet alleged. The fact then is certain: *The wages of sin is death,* and always will be so while God continues the same. What he published and declared at the giving of his first universal covenant to all mankind, in the person of Adam, he renewed and confirmed by the delivery of the law to Moses, which, as St. Paul observes, *was added because of transgressions,** *that the desert of them might be known,* and, *That the offence might abound* † in its penalty and curse unto death, now once more solemnly awarded against every offender and every offence.

These two grand manifestations of the nature and will of God, of the odiousness and great evil of sin, and of the manner in which it is to be treated, are further exemplified in the judgments upon sinners recorded in Scripture. Very striking and awful indeed they are; and here we must rest the point for ever, unless we would take upon us, as too many with horrid presumption do, to estimate the guilt of sin from our own false notions of it; to prescribe a law

* Gal. iii. 19. † Rom. v. 20.

to God, to divest him of his sovereignty, to cavil at his wisdom, and to dethrone his justice.

But let the reason of man, short as it is, be judge in the cause. The decree is gone out from the Almighty, and stands unrepealed in the revelation he has made of himself; *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.* Suppose now for a moment we are at liberty to call this decree in question, or to tamper with the threatening, by taking allowance for one sin. What is that sin? And if for one, why not for two or more; and where will you stop? If once you take the right of judging out of God's hands, there will be no end of pleading for transgression, no dread of it, no sense of good and evil, no submission to God's rule and authority, no obedience upon earth. The conclusion is evident; if all have sinned, all stand condemned by the sentence of a just God.

The expediency of the remedial covenant of gospel grace, in which mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other, and God is both just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, is here apparent: and the necessity of dependence upon the righteousness and death of Christ is demonstrated from the preceding account of God's unalterable justice, and of the guilt of sin being the

same in all ages of the world. One thing is needful: we must be declared free from guilt, and invested with a righteousness which shall stand before the law of sinless perfection, and entitle us to the kingdom of heaven. And if we have it not in ourselves, where must we look for it, but as existing in the person of Jesus Christ. Dependence therefore upon that righteousness, as wrought out by him for believers, and appointed of God for sinners to trust in, is the precious faith of the Gospel by which the soul is justified before God. As no other will reconcile the divine attributes, or answer the exigencies of mankind, concluded under sin, and always sinners; so nothing else must be the ground of our hope towards God.

Not works. Alas! we have none—None that will bear to be weighed in God's balance, or answer the demands of his justice. Look at what you think the best action of your life, or the most excellent grace of your soul; bring it to the touch-stone; examine it by the strait rule of the commandments, considered in their whole spiritual extent, and as reaching the heart and all its motions. In the matter or manner, principle or end, be assured you will find some grievous flaw; and condemnation instead of reward will be your desert. Let the judicious and pious HOOKER be heard on this head "If

"God," says he, "should make us an offer "thus large; search all the generations of men, "sithence the fall of our father Adam; find one "man that hath done one action, which hath "passed from him pure, without any stain or "blemish at all; and for that one man's only "action, neither man nor angel shall feel the "torments which are prepared for both. Do "you think that this ransom to deliver men and "angels could be found to be among the sons "of men?" *

Not sincerity. This has lately been adopted into our divinity, as if it were the gracious condition of the new covenant, in opposition to the law of perfect obedience. But it is no where mentioned as such in Scripture. So remarkable a variation, in a matter of the greatest importance, from other revelations which God had made of himself, and of the terms of our acceptance with him, had need be very distinctly and expressly pointed out; and yet when the proofs of it are called for, none are produced. It is indeed altogether a claim of human invention, and as it acknowledges defect of obedience, and therefore an absolute forfeiture, it delivers us up to justice, so long as the law of strict conformity to every command of God stands in full force against us. And let the

* Discourse of JUSTIFICATION. 7.

reader determine, after what has been said, whether that law were not designed to be the perpetual standard of the only obedience God will accept from man, or if not, how, or when it was abrogated.

Not faith and works, considered as co-operating to our justification, and both together making a claim of acceptance; for works which are confessed to have the nature of sin, by those who call in the aid of faith to supply their imperfection, cannot be admitted to any share in our justification, and must be excluded from the idea of it, because the matter turns entirely upon another point, and the great difficulty is still to be removed. Justice must be satisfied, the law must be fulfilled; with all our duties sin is found mixed; and unless it could be supposed that the new covenant is a relaxation of every preceding one, in respect of God's judgment of sin; and that now, in this last age of the world, he has exhibited himself as acting under a dispensing power, and discharging sin of its guilt, our case is left desperate.

But this is a dangerous expedient, unwarranted by Reason or Scripture; and we therefore believe, that *being justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord:* And that the whole of what will be accounted our deliverance from the curse of the law, is the

righteousness of Christ satisfying the divine justice by his obedience unto death, and, to the praise of the glory of his grace, imputed to sinners for salvation. This is the anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast; our full security against all fears, our first and only justification.

The notion of *a first and second justification* is the offspring of pride opposing the truth of God. They who adopt it consider not the justice of God, as still existing in all its rigour; and substitute instead of perfection what falls infinitely short of it. But the nature of God and the nature of sin remain always the same; consequently we are as much undone as ever, if gospel mercy extend no farther than to the first benefit of remission of sins, when we are admitted into the Christian covenant. Faith is not to be dropped after the beginning of conversion, as a thing of no further use. *The just shall live by faith;* its utility is to be experienced not once, but always; in every step of our progress, at the hour of death, and at the day of judgment; in hope, comfort, obedience here, and in heaven for ever.

It is not meant that faith has any such effect, or justifies merely as a work or righteousness of *our own.* No, it consists in a denial of the merit of all works, qualifications, or habits as inherent in man; and the essence of it is an un-

feigned humble submission to the righteousness of God, as accounted or given to us, and that not of debt but of grace. This may furnish an answer to those who ask, Why may not imperfect works justify as well as imperfect faith? taking it for granted that one can be no more perfect than the other. The reason is, that the indispensable condition of justification by works, is their perfection; consequently a claim founded on them must either be made good by an obedience entirely sinless, or the hope of salvation be wholly relinquished. Whereas faith, though it may be weak and imperfect, instead of exalting itself against the justice of God, and standing before him in the confidence of a lie, puts all from itself, and ascribes to God the whole glory of our salvation.

We shall close this little argument with observing, that faith is not understood, much less possessed, if it be not productive of more holiness, and more gracious affections, than could possibly be attained in any other way. The charge of vacating the law as a rule of life, followed close upon the first preaching of salvation by faith, and a base suspicion of its being prejudicial to the interests of virtue, is hardly ever to be rooted out of the minds of men, till they experience the power of faith themselves. But this can have no weight with those who remem-

ber the authoritative decision of Christ himself in this point upon a remarkable occasion, in opposition to the secret conceit of a proud Pharisee; *to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.** It is acknowledged, it is strenuously maintained, that the heart of man is exceedingly depraved, and our affections corrupted to the very root: But you charge the nature of man with greater depravity than you are aware of, when you suppose the superabundant love of God, manifested in the plan of redemption, and especially in the wonderful manner of its accomplishment, can kindle no love, and excite no gratitude. On the contrary, it is the peculiar glory of gospel grace, to humble every believer in the dust, and to fill him with the most dreadful apprehensions of sin, in order to raise him from his dead state, and to establish him in obedience from love to God, from holy admiration of his perfections, and from an earnest desire to be partaker of his blessedness. And if the Gospel be not effectual to this end by the operation of the Holy Ghost, therein displayed and secured to every sinner who really believes the Gospel; if the love of the holy Trinity do not touch every string of our hearts, and put all the powers of our souls in motion to make some suitable returns to the ever-blessed

* Luke vii. 47.

God, our condition is indeed hopeless. We may venture to affirm, that a zeal for works truly Christian can be built on no other foundation; and that a desire to perfect holiness will never have a place in the heart of man, but under a sense of redeeming grace, and of the complete salvation that it sets before us.

It is therefore greatly to be lamented, that neglect of this doctrine should be so much the characteristic of our age; and that the gospel-motive to obedience should not be more generally inculcated in a Christian country. In vain do we hope to revive the decayed spirit of Religion, and establish a pure MORALITY on any other than Scripture grounds. A spurious kind of it, outward, partial, founded chiefly on love of reputation, with little regard to God, nature itself can discern, and in some degree attain. Poor and low attainment! Yet this is what we are prone to substitute in the place of inward spiritual renovation, to which nature is altogether averse. But true holiness, which consists in profound self-abasement and subjection to the God and Father of our spirits, in love of nature and will, in heavenly-mindedness, in ardent longings after purity of heart, is the genuine product of a lively faith; and I say again, no where to be found, till the ever-blessed name of Jesus, his grace and truth, his compassion,

dying love, and all-perfect obedience, are the meditation, delight, and confidence of the soul.

In this view, and with these sentiments strong upon his mind, the author has endeavoured in the following Treatise to delineate *The Complete Duty of Man*. His book bears this title, not from any arrogant conceit he holds of its worth, but from its comprehending the *doctrines* as well as the *precepts* of the Gospel, from its placing things in their proper order, and preparing the way to Christian practice by Christian faith, and to faith by conviction of sin. The attempt may appear to some unnecessary, as *The Whole Duty of Man*, so called, has long been in possession of general esteem, and is to be found in almost every family. But it is evident that the great thing is wanting in that celebrated treatise, towards obtaining the end for which it was written; since Christ the lawgiver will always speak in vain unless Christ the Saviour be first known. Christian morality is produced and maintained by this principle, *we love God, because he first loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins:* All treatises therefore written to promote holiness of living must be deplorably defective, in which the cross of Christ is not laid as the foundation, and constantly kept in view, and every Duty enforced

as having relation to the Redeemer. This is the apostolical method of inculcating Christian obedience ; and all other obedience is pharisaical, a mere refined species of self-righteousness.

It is proper to apprize the Reader, that he is indebted to MR. DICKINSON'S Letters for several paragraphs in the chapter on the difference between *true and false repentance :* and to MR. MACLAURIN'S Sermons for several fine sentiments in the chapter *On the foundation of Faith.* In a few other places also in the work, where a masterly argument or a beautiful illustration of the subject on which the author was treating occurred, he has taken the liberty of enriching his own work with it.

Nothing further is necessary to be added, but an earnest request, in which the author begs every reader would join with him to the Fountain of all good, that it would please him to make the following sheets instrumental in giving to those who peruse them, such a manifestation of the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as shall make sin and the world, with their bewitching charms, appear vain, despicable, odious—such a conviction of human ignorance, guilt, and depravity, as may infinitely endear the name of a Redeemer and Sanctifier, and create tender compassion and humbleness of mind one towards another—such a knowledge

of the pardon and peace, the strength and power, the purity and holiness which ennoble and bless those who have scriptural faith in Christ, as may manifest the emptiness of deistical and formal religion, and excite an earnest desire to behold the meridian glory of CHRISTIANITY in the eternal world; where every creature breaks forth in fervent acknowledgment of infinite obligation, saying, WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER, AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH, AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND BLESSING!

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THE DUTY OF MAN:

OR,

A SYSTEM

OF DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL

CHRISTIANITY.

SUNDAY I. CHAPTER I.

On the Excellency of the Soul.

IT is evident that man is endued with an active principle, entirely distinct from his body. For while his body is chained down, an unconscious mass of matter, to a spot of earth, his soul can soar and expatiate in contemplation: can reflect, and with variety almost infinite, can compare the numberless objects which present themselves before it. When his body has attained maturity and perfect strength, his soul arrives not to a state of perfection, but goes on increasing in wisdom and knowledge; and when the body is feeble or sinks into decay, the soul is often full of vigour; or feels grief and anguish all its own.

To demonstrate the excellency of the soul, in its properties so singular and admirable, is of great im-

portance: because all that is comprehended under the word religion, respects the soul. And many precepts in the book of God must be resisted as unreasonable, or slighted as unnecessary, if the salvation of the soul be not considered as the greatest good, man can attain; the ruin of it, the greatest evil he can suffer.

To prove the worth of the soul, I shall make my appeal to *your own observations*, and to *the evidences of holy Scripture*, entirely waving all philosophical inquiries into its nature, and all abstract reasoning concerning it.*

Observation then upon what passes before your eyes, powerfully proves the worth and excellency of the soul. For what is the case of thousands around you, even if it has not already been your own? Are they not mourning over some tender parent, some affectionate friend, or near relation? One week, the dear deceased, how much was he valued! What a sprightly entertaining companion, perhaps, in the prime of life; perhaps, of personal comeliness!—The next, ah! sudden, bitter, prodigious transformation! the

* Let not this be thought to proceed from an ignorant contempt of philosophical inquiries, when confined to their proper sphere; since this is the determination of one of the greatest philosophers in whom our nation glories.

"All our inquiries about the nature of the soul (says Lord Bacon) "must be bound over at last to religion, for otherwise they still lie "open to many errors. For seeing the substance of the soul was not "deduced from the mass of heaven and earth, but immediately from "God, how can the knowledge of the reasonable soul be derived from "philosophy? It must be drawn from the same inspiration from "whence the substance thereof first flowed." *Advancement of Learning*. Book iv. Chap. 3.

desirable object is become a putrid mass; insufferably loathsome, fit only for the grave. Do you ask, how it comes to pass, that what was lovely to admiration, only a week or day before, should so soon be even hideous to look upon? The answer loudly proclaims the dignity and excellency of the Soul. For could the dead parent, friend, or relation, hold discourse with you on the subject, his answer would be to this effect. "Are you seized with afflicting surprise? Do you, "with tears of tenderness, bewail the frightful change "you see, in a form long so familiar and so pleasing "to you? The cause is this—The immortal inhabi- "tant, which for a few years lodged under this roof "of flesh, hath removed its abode. My soul by its "presence imparted to this body all its motion, life, "and beauty. The instant the one took its destined "flight, the other began to turn into an offensive car- "cass, which must moulder into dust, and dust re- "main, till his voice, who is the RESURRECTION AND "THE LIFE, unite it for ever to its former inmate."

From this most striking difference, therefore, between a dear parent, friend, or relation, active, useful, and beloved; and the cold pale piece of outcast earth, which he instantly becomes upon the departure of the soul; understand what dignity and worth must necessarily belong to the soul.

And if from this fact, daily passing before your eyes, you turn to the *page written by inspiration of God*, it is impossible to remain ignorant of the excellency of the soul.

What can be imagined more sublime than the account of its creation? Look up to the Heavens; im-

mensely high, immeasurably wide as they are, God only spake, and instantly, with all their host, they had their being. The earth, the air, the sea, with all their millions of beasts, birds, and fishes, were formed instantaneously by the breath of his mouth. But, behold! before the human soul is created, a council of the Eternal Trinity is held. God said, *Let us make man in our own image, after our own likeness. So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.** He formed his soul in its moral faculties and powers, a sinless, immortal transcript of himself.

To deface this image, and ruin a creature which the love of God had so highly exalted, was an attempt equal to the execrable malice Satan bore against God, and against the favourite work of his hand. But no sooner did the devil, by his accursed subtilty, bring on the soul an injury, tending to its utter destruction, than the most high God, by the *method used to recover it*, declared a second time still more loudly the exceeding greatness of its worth. For take a just survey of the majesty of HIM, who only of all in Heaven, was able or sufficient to restore the soul to the favour and fruition of God. Before him the depth of the unfathomable seas, the height of the loftiest mountains, the vast dimensions of the earth, and the immense circuit of the skies, are as the small dust of the balance. Before him, the vast multitudes which people the whole earth, with all their pomp, are less than nothing and vanity. This is HE, behold him! † This is he

* Gen. i. 26, 27.

† The Reader is desired, as he would not wish to dishonour and injure the Redeemer by mean and unworthy thoughts of him, to meditate deeply on the grand and divine things which are written of him.

who takes upon himself a work impossible for angels to effect, even the Redemption of the soul. He undertakes to replace it in the favour of God—not by the word of his mouth, as in the day that he made the heavens and the earth; but by a contrivance infinitely costly and painful; by a process of many steps, each of them mysterious to angels as well as to men. To redeem the soul, he lays aside his glory. He is born poor and mean. He lives afflicted, insulted, oppressed. In his death he is made a sin-offering and a curse, presenting to the Father a divine obedience, and a death fully satisfactory to his broken law.———Pause then a while, and duly consider who the Redeemer is, and what he hath done. Then will you necessarily conclude, that whatever the world admires as excellent, and extols as most valuable, is unspeakably mean when put in the balance against the worth of the soul.

It is indeed a matter of the utmost difficulty, to believe that one in every perfection equal with the Eternal Father should humble himself to the cross, and shed his blood on it to ransom the soul. Here reason with all its efforts is lost in the unfathomable depth of mystery; and, if left to itself, would lead into perpetual cavil; if not to an absolute denial of the reality of the fact. The method used to prevent such a deni-

In the evangelical prophet Isaiah, you will find his majesty set forth in the most lofty and affecting manner, and by a variety of such glorious images, as will more exalt your apprehensions of him than any train of abstract reasoning. In the xlth chapter, from whence the above description of his grandeur is taken, there is enough declared both of his grace and divinity to make him appear altogether glorious,

al, which would be blasphemy against God and perdition to ourselves, still more forcibly adds evidence to the worth of the soul. For the same *Eternal Spirit* which in the beginning brought light out of darkness, order and beauty out of chaos, comes down from heaven to bear witness of Redemption. *He shall glorify me,* saith the Redeemer, *for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.** In other words, it is his office so to display the glory of the person, righteousness, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, that those truths, which are foolishness to the reason of the natural man, may be discerned in all their excellency. This Eternal Spirit (called the Spirit of Truth, because the only effectual teacher of Divine truth) is continually present with the Church of Christ, by his illumination to make known the things which are freely given us of God.

Judge then, what must be the excellency of that immortal principle within you, which in its original birth is the offspring of the God of Glory, and impressed with his own image; then the purchase of the blood of his Son; and now the disciple of the Holy Ghost. When nobility condescends to the office of teaching, no one of less dignity than the heir of a kingdom must be the scholar. How great then must be the excellency of the soul, which has the Spirit of God for its appointed instructor and continual guide!

It will still farther prove the worth of the soul, to consider that amazing elevation of glory to which it will be advanced, or that dire extremity of woe into which it will be plunged, hereafter. Soon as the few

* John xvi. 14.

years allotted for its education and trial here on earth expire, if grace and the offers of salvation have been duly accepted and improved, it will gain admission into the city of the living God, where shines an everlasting day; where every thing that might but tend to excite fear, or for a moment to impair the completeness of felicity is for ever removed. And while the soul possesses a magnificent habitation, eternal in the heavens; the company with which it will be associated, in excellency far surpasses all the glories of its place of abode. Man, by revolting from God, was banished from any commerce with the glorious spirits that people the invisible world. But when the designs of grace are accomplished in the soul, it becomes a partaker of all the invaluable privileges and dignities of the angels. It is clothed with a brightness of glory refulgent as the sun, it is raised to such degrees of excellency as exceed our highest reach of thought; every defect and blemish inherent in its present condition is done away, and its moral perfections surpass in splendour the outward beauty with which it is arrayed. Now, if we estimate the dignity of a person from the exalted station he is born to fill, and the possessions he shall one day call his own, how great must the worth of the soul be judged, which, unless ruined by its own incorrigible sinfulness, is to inherit the riches of eternity; to stand before the throne of Jehovah on a rank with angels; to drink of rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand for evermore.

It is, on the other hand, evidence equally strong, of the value of the soul, though, alas! of a very melancholy and distressing kind, with which the Scrip-

tural account of the extreme misery it must suffer if it perish, furnishes us. If it be not counted worthy to be admitted, through the Saviour's mediation, into glory; O sad alternative! its doom, like the sentence pronounced on some offender of great dignity, whose distinction serves only to inflame his guilt, is full of horror. It is cut off from all communion with God; removed to an immeasurable distance; separated by an impassable gulph. It must have Him for the avenger of its crimes, in comparison of whose strength all created might is weaker than a new-born babe. That arm is to be stretched forth against it, which urges the planets in their orbits, and taketh up the isles as a very little thing. The soul that perishes, is to suffer the punishment prepared for the devil and his angels; to suffer punishment, the very same in kind with that of the avowed enemy of the blessed God; whose business, whose only joy ever since his fall from heaven, hath been to defeat, if it were possible, all God's designs of grace; to undermine his kingdom, and tread his honour in the dust; who has already seduced souls without number, and who will go on in his course of treason and enmity against God, till the day of executing vengeance on him be fully come. Though not in equal torment, yet in the same hell with the apostate spirit, is the soul that perishes to endure the wrath of God.

Whether therefore you regard the *felicity* or the *ruin*, which in a few fleeting years the soul of man must experience, you will find it hard to determine which of the two most forcibly bespeaks its dignity.

These evidences, obvious to every eye which reads the Scriptures, prove, in a manner not to be ques-

tioned, that the poorest beggar carries greater wealth in his own bosom, than all the world can give him. The soul, that enables him to think and choose, surpasses in worth all that the eye ever saw, or the fancy ever imagined. Before one such immortal being, all the magnificence of the natural world appears diminutive, because transitory. All these things wax old, as doth a garment, and all the works of nature shall be burnt up; but the years of the soul, its happiness or its woe, like the unchangeable God its creator, endure for ever.

From these evidences you will perceive, that the schemes which engage the attention of eminent statesmen and mighty kings, nay even the delivery of a nation from ruin or slavery, are trifles when set in competition with the salvation of a single soul. You will see the propriety of that astonishing assertion, that in Heaven, the seat of glory, and among angels, whose thoughts can never stoop to any thing little, *There is joy over one sinner that repenteth.* You will see why the Lord God Almighty is at so much pains (if the expression may be used) to awaken the children of men to a just concern for the salvation of their souls: Why the warnings he gives them are so solemn, his calls so repeated and pressing, and his entreaties so affectionate. All these things follow as the just and natural conclusions from the matchless excellency of the soul.*

* For the Prayer suited to this subject, see Prayer the *Seventh.*

SUNDAY II. CHAPTER II.

The Advantages of a just Conviction of the Soul's Excellency.

THE incomparable excellency of the soul has been attempted to be shewn by various proofs. A *clear, strong, and abiding conviction of this excellency* is the foundation of all real Religion, and on many accounts indispensably necessary.

For want of a just perception of the worth of the soul, the amusements of folly and the pleasures of sin are looked upon by *the young* as the chief sources of delight. They are shy of religion, notwithstanding its promises of peace, of joy, of eternal life; and they regard it as a malevolent enemy to their happiness. But no sooner do they once truly apprehend the excellency of the soul, than the knowledge of spiritual objects is sought after and highly valued. Thus informed, the language even of youthful hearts is this: "The "bloom of my days and the vigour of my life shall be "devoted to my best, my everlasting interest. A sight "of the worth of my soul has delivered me from the "fascinating power of polluting lusts, and has broken "all the magic force of their cruel enchantments."

The same knowledge of the worth of the soul is absolutely necessary to preserve men inviolably *honest* amidst the temptations which abound in trade, and in every profession. For on the Exchange, in the University, the Coffee-house, in almost every circle of private company, infectious discourse in praise of

riches and honour is poured forth, and contaminates the principles of those who hear it. From the worldly lusts natural to man thus inflamed spring all the frauds of trade. Hence the extortion, the falsehood, the imposition, the spirit of extravagant speculation by which the character and peace of thousands are ruined. They are engendered by a rage for money, and a boundless desire of filthy lucre. Nothing can controul this wide-spreading evil, but a perception of the soul's inestimable worth. Let this take place, and immediately the deformity of the former false, defiling ideas of worldly advancement and gain, is discovered. Trade will then be carried on with honesty and intetrity. An enlightened conscience, like a vigilant centinel, will sound an alarm in every hour of danger; it will keep the tradesman and merchant punctually true to their best, their greatest interest, and enable them with ease to conquer those temptations which before led them away captive; *What,* they will say, *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

The necessity of a strong and abiding perception of the worth of the soul, appears also from this consideration, that it is the only *ground of real prayer,* and the cause of its success. In addresses from man to man, hypocrisy is detestable; how much more in addresses from man to God! But how is it possible prayer can be any thing more than hypocrisy, when the suppliant is not impressed with a due sense of the worth of his soul? Who can deprecate the wrath revealed against sin, implore deliverance from its defilement, or earnestly intreat a supply of his spiritual

wants, who does not perceive the worth of the soul? In the nature of things we can have no deep concern, where we apprehend no great misery if we fail of success, or advantage, if we are crowned with it. We may indeed personate in our closets or at church a man in earnest pursuit of spiritual blessings; and be constant in the use of those very prayers which such an one, with the most exalted devotion, would pour out before his God. But unless we feel the same spirit, through the same knowledge of the excellency of the soul, we only act a part in the closet or in the church, as a player does on the stage: We appear in a character which is no more our own, than that of the king or hero on the stage is his. Hence multitudes constantly engaged in acts of devotion, remain grossly ignorant, and utterly unaffected by every thing which they profess to believe, and day by day seem to implore: Their confessions are deceitful, their prayers without fervour, and their thanksgivings without gratitude. But such devotion must be as unsuccessful as it is insincere. God is a God of truth. He must receive services just as they are; and where nothing but outward homage and mere words are offered to him, nothing is obtained. Sin is not pardoned, nor evil tempers subdued. All the fruit of such feigned intercourse with the God of Heaven, is to flatter self-love, and to harden men in presumption, till their hypocrisy is at once fully discovered and punished.

On the contrary, are you conscious of the worth of your soul? This will dispose you for every devout exercise. Godly sorrow for sin will accompany the confession of it, when lamented as an enemy to your best, your immortal interest. Ardent and urgent will

be the supplications for grace and pardon, when their importance, as connected with a soul of inestimable worth, is seen and felt. Most grateful and affectionate will be the thanksgivings for mercies already vouchsafed, when every instance of favour from above is considered as a pledge of the eternal felicity of the soul.

It follows therefore, that in the same degree in which it is necessary to resist temptations to evil, or profitably to engage in the solemn acts of religion, it is necessary also to be impressed with the worth of the soul.

The natural result of such an impression will be a diligent care for the salvation of the soul.

Now the supreme wisdom of such carefulness is most evident from comparing beauty, honour, knowledge, riches, or whatever else is usually valued amongst men with the soul.

The elegant lovely *form,* which captivates the eye of almost every beholder, and fills the possessor with perpetual vanity, ill rewards the anxious carefulness used to preserve it. No cautious attention, no human power or skill is able to preserve it from the waste of time, the blast of sickness, or the untimely stroke of death.

The place of *honour,* and the name of applause, for which thousands sacrifice their ease and sell their liberty, is of little value, since it is subject to all the caprice of fickle-minded man. How many, once the favourites of a court, the idols of a kingdom, have lived to see all their blooming honours wither, and their names sink into oblivion, if not contempt!

Are you ambitious to climb the envied summit of *literary fame;* and shine without a rival in the acquisition of knowledge? In one fatal hour, a paralytic

stroke, a violent fever, may disorder the structure of your brain, rifle all the cells of knowledge, and efface from your memory the very traces of all that has been committed to its keeping. Thus you may be left the sad survivor of yourself. A mortifying spectacle to human pride; a melancholy, but irresistible proof, how much higher men may rate the attainment of human knowledge than its precarious tenure justifies.

If your great aim be to become *rich,* of chief eminence in your trade, able to command all outward things which can administer to your vanity or pleasure; still how unworthy of your supreme desire and care is such a condition, because absolutely insecure! Life itself, the foundation of all temporary enjoyments, is but as a beauteous vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Each day, we know, is translating some of the opulent sons of industry, into a world where not a mite of all their gain can follow them.

Nay, if you are engrossed by the care of providing for those tender pledges of God's love to you, the offspring of your own body, whom you were a monster of cruelty to neglect; yet here you may be suddenly, and wholly disappointed. Your darling child, the living image of yourself, how unable are you to preserve its invaluable life from perils, and fierce disease! When parted from you on a visit or some business, you may, like Sisera's fond mother, be chiding its delay, and, with all the impatience of love, be asking, Wherefore is my son or daughter, so long in coming? while some appointment of God has taken away the desire of your eyes with a stroke.

Thus, if you take a full survey of every thing which

the children of men seek with greatest anxiety to enjoy; compared with a supreme concern for the salvation of the soul, and unremitting regard to its interests, how vain is it! Nay, whatever it be, except the soul, about which you are careful, it has this most degrading circumstance attending it, it has the condition only of an annuity for life: Each successive year makes a considerable decrease in its value, and at death the whole is at an end for ever.

But if your principal care and solicitude be for the salvation of your soul, all the unexpected disasters, disappointments, and losses, which harass the sinful children of men, will become affecting proofs of the supreme wisdom of your choice, and the unrivalled excellency of your pursuit. Even the tears that stream down the cheeks of the miserable, and the complaints of those who are disappointed in worldly schemes, will pronounce you blessed, who are athirst for your immortal soul's salvation. Are you conscious of its worth? Are you striving in daily intercourse with God, its Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, to secure its eternal welfare? Then you may set all the evils that terrify the human race at defiance. Your inferior and mortal part they may wound, but they cannot strike deep enough, to injure your soul. In the midst of what, otherwise, would prove ruin insupportable, your wise choice will cover you like armour, and render you invulnerable.

Are you *poor,* and treated with scorn by the sons of pride? you will have examples and prospects more than sufficient to support you. You will see your own case in the instructive history of the saints of God, who were destitute and afflicted; and in that wonderful contrast of meanness and grandeur, extreme poverty

and immense wealth, the dying Lazarus. With patience, with gladness of heart you will see, that the deepest distress, and the surest title to glory, may be for a small moment united.* In every case where proper care for the soul hath prevailed, you will see that poverty, however extreme, sufferings, however long and grievous, add both to the weight and brightness of future glory.

In *sickness* also, the supreme wisdom of having been careful above all things for your soul, will shine with peculiar lustre. For though health be absolutely essential to a sensitive happiness; though the least ache, or bodily disorder, deprive the proud and worldly-minded of their enjoyments, yet the soul, if with due care it has been disciplined in the ways appointed by God, finds sources from whence to derive consolation under the most violent pressures; consolation sufficient to banish both outward impatience and inward dejection from their accustomed throne, the chamber of sickness and pain. With a lovely and edifying meekness, you will regard such discipline, though trying to sense, and oppressive to the flesh, as prepared by the all-wise and merciful Refiner, to purge away every base mixture that still cleaves to and defiles your soul. The welfare of your soul, dearer to you than all external comforts, will induce you to welcome the visitations, which are of such sovereign use to promote its health. In short, in sickness the whole man is a miserable sufferer, where the soul has been forgotten: where earnestly cared for, and instructed in divine truth, the inferior part alone feels the pressure.

To advance still farther: *death*, the detector of all

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

cheats—death, the touchstone of all true worth, and therefore the king of terrors, to those whose care every thing has shared but their souls; even death itself will confirm the supreme wisdom of your conduct. The death-bed, on which the gay, the prosperous, and the noble, lay down their heads appalled and confounded, is the theatre for displaying the fortitude of those who have sought, as the one thing needful, the salvation of their souls. The former are confounded, because unprepared. The loss of all they valued is coming upon them: their approaching change can promise them nothing; it is much if it forbode not dreadful consequences. But to the latter, every thing wears another aspect. Must the world be left by them? it has been already renounced and vanquished. Must all temporal good be forsaken for ever? how placid, how calm the surrender, when the riches of eternity are theirs! no striving, no querulous repining against the irresistible summons to depart, when that very departure has been habitually expected, as a translation of the soul to its proper everlasting happiness.

In fact, dying Christians, that is, all who have duly sought in a right method, the salvation of their souls, have given proofs of the supreme wisdom of their conduct in the hour of nature's sorrow and distress: so that those fine lines of Dr. *Young*, are most justly descriptive of the happy few, whose souls have been more precious to them than every temporal concern or comfort.

> The chamber where the good man meets his fate
> Is privileg'd beyond the common walk
> Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heav'n:

> Heaven waits on the last moment; owns her friends
> On this side death, and points them out to men,
> A lecture silent, but of sov'reign pow'r.*

All these advantages, arising from supreme carefulness for the salvation of the soul, are still more worthy of regard, because not at all *uncertain*. You may be braving the thickest dangers of the field of war, to obtain the name of valour, and the place of command; yet fall an early victim in the bloody battle, or after it, your services may be neglected. You may burn with inextinguishable ardour, to stand high in the rank of scholars, and ruin your health by intense study, yet die mortified at the littleness of your reputation. Your labour to succeed in business may be unwearied, yet, through a thousand circumstances which you have no power to prevent, you may repeatedly suffer disappointment, and poverty still remain your portion. The favour of patrons, friends, relations, may be assiduously courted, and appear promising to your sanguine wishes; and yet others may supplant you, and, receiving the benefits you were grasping in idea, make the very names of patron, friend, relation, odious. The world is every day exhibiting instances of bitter disappointment, in each of the cases above described.

But if with stedfast and anxious perseverance you have sought for the salvation of your soul, through Jesus Christ, you have nothing to do with the changes ever incident to the things of time and sense. Your concern is with the blessed God, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. You may therefore be rich, or poor; exalted, or depressed; belov-

* *Night Thoughts*. Book ii.

ed, or slighted, by those on whom you are dependent; you may enjoy health, or be oppressed by mortal disease, while in each state were you to ask yourself, what course could I have best taken for my present peace and felicity? Reason, conscience, Scripture, will all reply, the very course you *have* taken, that of caring, in the first place, for the salvation of your soul.

To say no more; the quick *succession of years*, which exceedingly impoverish, as they pass by, every man whose soul is not his chief care, will, on the contrary, be accumulating for you the true riches. Like a prudent factor, who, instead of lavishing his gain in present luxury, yearly remits it home, that he may return to enjoy life in his native country after all his toils with ease and honour; so will you be growing rich towards God; sure to return, by death, to that happy country, where, amidst congratulating saints and angels, you shall enter upon the possession of an inheritance prepared for your soul, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*

* For the Prayer adapted to this Chapter, see Prayer the *Seventh*.

SUNDAY III. CHAPTER III.

The Scripture Character of God.

THE first duty of a Christian is to conceive of God only according to the revelation which he has given of himself: To meditate on this revelation with

humility, diligence, and prayer, not daring to indulge fallacious reasonings, lest he should form an imaginary god, and then worship the creature of his own imagination.

Nor will such an absolute submission of the understanding to revelation, in this matter, be thought in the least grievous or dishonourable, when it is considered, that of ourselves, and in our present state of darkness and corruption, we are utterly unable to form any just conceptions of the divine nature and perfections. When once we forsake the guidance of Scripture, we are left to uncertain conjecture; we put ourselves in the condition of the unenlightened heathens; and their errors, on this most important subject, as universal as they were lamentable, are a sufficient evidence of the inability and vanity of unassisted reason, and of the ignorance of man in divine things.

I shall therefore present you with a transcript of what the sacred oracles have delivered to us, on this important point of belief. In absolute submission to them, I shall endeavour to delineate the character of the blessed God, as drawn by himself, and explain his nature and will, his acts and providences, his decrees and purposes, as exhibited in the Bible. Thus, knowing the God with whom we have to do, may we be faithful to the light he hath given us, and regulate our conduct towards him, by the infallible standard of his own plain and positive declarations! And may he himself render them effectual to enlighten the understanding; so that every reader, in the devout fervour of his soul, may exclaim before him, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and*

true are thy ways, thou King of Saints: who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?

In the first place the Scripture represents God, as possessed of the incommunicable perfection of *eternal existence.* All other beings once were not: There was a period when the most excellent of them first began to exist; and the same power which gave them life, could again reduce them to their original nothing.

On the contrary, God has ever existed; the same in essence, felicity and perfection: from all eternity he has been what he now is, and what he will eternally remain. The existence of things which are seen, compels us to acknowledge this incomprehensible truth; and agreeable to it is his own account of his eternal power and godhead: *I AM,* saith he, *that I AM.— The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,* is his title. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were formed, from everlasting to everlasting, he was God.*

Nearly allied to this perfection of eternal existence, is the *unchangeableness* of God. His love and hatred remain immutably the same towards their respective objects. *I am the Lord, I change not,* is one of those sovereign titles by which he manifests himself to us: with him *is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* In proof of this excellency, God is called *a rock.* This metaphor intimates, that as a rock continues stedfast and immoveable, whilst the surrounding ocean is in a perpetual fluctuation; so, though all the creatures of God, from the lowest to the very highest of intelligent beings, are subject to change; capable of new additions, or alterations with respect to their knowledge,

their power, or their happiness; God alone is absolutely the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

God is *a spirit*. The distinguishing properties of spirit are, understanding, will, consciousness, and activity. By virtue of these properties, every spiritual being differs totally from dead matter or body, and is infinitely superior to it in its nature and essence. But though this difference between spirit and matter, is sufficient to help our weak conceptions; yet are we taught in Scripture, that the ever-living God surpasses in excellence all created spirits, infinitely more than they do, in their nature and properties, merely animal substances. For God not only declares of himself that he is a spirit, but that he is *the Father of spirits, and the God of the spirits of all flesh*. It follows, therefore, that it is not sufficient merely to conceive that God is a spirit, meaning, by that name, a living, intelligent, and active being, essentially distinguished from the material frame our eyes behold: For though this is most truly affirmed of him, yet must you add to him perfections, which no other spirits possess; as well as separate from him every kind of imperfection which adheres to them. They exist within certain limits, they are ignorant of many things, they are defective in power; but the Father of Spirits himself, is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent.

God is *omnipresent*. The universe, which owes its formation and existence entirely to his creative power, is not only governed, but continually sustained by him. The whole immeasurable frame of nature must therefore be pervaded by his all-enlivening influence. Accordingly, this sublime and majestic interrogation is put by himself to the children of men; *Do not I fill*

*heaven and earth? saith the Lord.** And in the cxxxixth *Psalm*, this perfection of God is described with equal sublimity and force. The enlightened and inspired prophet begins with making the inquiry, whether it were possible for him to hide himself from the Author of his being and the Creator of all things: *Whither* (saith he) *shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven,* into the regions above the firmament, *thou art there;* I should not only find myself still within the limits of thy sovereign dominion, but under thy immediate inspection. *If I make my bed in hell,* that is, plunge myself into the unknown mansions of the dead, and worlds invisible, where even imagination loses itself in darkness, *behold, thou art there! If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;* if, with the swiftness of the solar ray, I could in an instant convey myself to the uttermost part of the western world, the wings of the morning are not swift enough to carry me from thy pursuing hand; *even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me;* I shall exist in thee, O God! thy presence will be diffused around me, thy enlivening power will support my frame. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me, yea the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and light are both alike to thee.* I myself, my actions and circumstances, are equally conspicuous in the thickest shades of night, as in the brightest splendours of the meridian sun. The uni-

* Jer. xxiii, 24.

verse is the temple of the Lord, and every part of it is filled with his presence. And as the Scripture thus forcibly describes the presence of God with all things actually existing, so it expressly teaches us, that, vast as the dimensions of the creation are, they neither limit nor circumscribe his being. With holy admiration we are commanded to say unto God, *Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!**

To this amazing perfection of God, his omnipresence, is joined *omnipotence*. A human artist, or created agent, can only fashion his work from materials already prepared for him, and which he cannot make: but the glorious God commands things into Being. He was not indebted to pre-existent matter in the formation of the world; for *the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*. On the contrary; all things, whether of a material or spiritual nature, sprung into existence before the mighty God at his call, and were created at his pleasure. "The hea-" vens, and all the powers therein;" the earth, and all things which are therein, are not only the work of his hands, but by the *word* of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the *breath* of his mouth: *I the Lord*, saith he, *have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I* commanded.

The same almighty power of God, to which the whole creation owes its birth, is manifested also in the disposition and preservation of the world in order and harmony. Thus the exertions of the almighty power of God are continually placed before us: *He watereth*

* Kings, viii. 27.

the earth, and blesseth the increase of it. He covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth: he giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes: he divideth the sea with his power, and layeth up the depths in store-houses: fire and hail, storm and tempest, fulfil his word.

The constitution and course of nature, which thoughtless and profane men are wont to consider as the effects of necessity, rather than of all-wise direction, are wholly owing, we are taught, to the almighty power of God. *It is he alone,* saith the Scripture, *who makes the day-spring know its place, and stretcheth out the shadows of the evening—that commands the sun to shine by day, and the moon by night: that prepares a place for the rain, and a way for the lightning and thunder—that maketh the herbs to grow upon the earth. The hand of the Lord doth all these things.*

It must farther be observed, that the Scripture gives us the most awful idea of the boundless power which belongeth to God, by declaring, that he can in a moment dissolve the whole frame of nature. Human force is at much pains to demolish, what before it toiled to erect: but the might of the most high God can, with greater ease than we can admit the thought, change the face of creation, and destroy what seems to be built on the most stable foundation. *He removeth the mountains, and they know it not; he overturneth them in his anger. He commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars. He shaketh the earth out of its place, and the pillars thereof tremble. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence.*

But in the attribute of mere power, however boundless and irresistible, there is no loveliness. We may indeed be astonished, and tremble before it; but to contemplate it with pleasure, and to conceive of it as the object of delight and of trust, we must behold it in union with other perfections. In union with such perfections it coexists in the blessed God; for he is as infinite in *knowledge* as in power. More clearly does he discern his own eternity, than we our temporary duration: more perfectly his own immensity, than we our limited condition of being: more certainly his own extent of wisdom and power, than we the thoughts which are passing through our own minds.

But if God knows himself, he must know also the work of his own hands: for even the meanest artificer, though imperfectly acquainted with the nature of the materials on which he works, knows the effects of his own operations. Since, therefore, from the greatest to the least, from the utmost circuit of heaven to the centre of the earth, there is nothing which the hand of God has not formed, and which his providence does not direct; every thing must be thoroughly known to him. Wherever his power works, there his understanding must discern. The vast fabric therefore of the universe, with all its laws and contents, with all events from first to last, are known unto him. The innumerable host of sinless angels, and the world of fallen apostate ones; the generations of mankind, with all the thoughts, desires, and designs that have been in the mind of each individual, and all the words which have ever fled from their lips, fall under his continual notice. He, with the most exact and infallible comprehension, knows all the active principles of the spi-

rits he has formed; how they will be affected by every object which can come before them; in what manner they will act upon every temptation which can try them, and in every circumstance in which they can possibly be placed. These ideas of the blessed God, his own oracles teach us to conceive. *The ways of man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. The eyes of the Lord are in every place: he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; he knoweth the things that come into our mind, every one of them: neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do.*

And as God is perfect in knowledge, so is he in the attribute of *wisdom*, which is the best exercise and improvement of knowledge. By virtue of this quality he superintends, and so adjusts all the parts of the universe, that, whatever changes any of them may undergo, their usefulness and connection with each other may be uniformly maintained. By the exercise of the same attribute he often accomplishes his designs, by means, to human apprehension, the most unlikely. He founds the manifestation of his glory upon what a depraved world despises and derides; and, in the weakness of his agents, *perfects*, that is, displays *his own praise*. He entangles the rulers of darkness in their own nets, and ruins their designs by their own stratagems: the greatest cruelty of Satan and his instruments, he makes subservient to the designs of his mercy, and overrules even the apostacy of *Adam*, to display his own manifold wisdom to angels and to men.

He has established the world in his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion. He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that they cannot perform their enterprises. His counsels stand for ever, and the thoughts of his heart from generation to generation.

These perfections, called, by way of distinction, the *natural* perfections of God, the more they are considered, the higher must they raise our wonder and astonishment. Who can meditate on eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence, and not feel that they are subjects too stupendous for any created understanding to grasp! But the *moral* perfections of God we can comprehend with greater clearness. And it is as possessed of these, that God claims from us the highest reverence, fear, love, trust, and obedience.

The first of these perfections is his *goodness*. By this we mean that principle of good-will, by virtue of which his almighty power and infinite wisdom are exercised in the liberal communication of happiness to his creatures. His bountiful hand supplies their wants, and pours out his benefits upon them all. He makes no other distinction than what necessarily arises from the different qualities or capacities of the respective objects; no other difference than what his own most perfect character requires should be made. *The Lord*, saith the Scripture, *is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He openeth his hand, and satisfieth every living thing. He is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. The earth is full of*

the goodness of the Lord. So strong is his goodness in its tendency, and so wide in its extent, as to bless not simply his creatures, but even rebels against his government, and enemies to his truth. *He causeth his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, on the evil and on the good, on the unjust as well as on the just. He endures, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.* He allures them, and encourages their return to him. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Come now,* saith he, *and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* And, lest these asseverations should not be sufficient to remove suspicions of his willingness to forgive the most enormous offenders, when they turn to him: he swears by himself, *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.* And that all the generations of men, who should ever receive his word, might form the highest conceptions of his glorious goodness, he passed before *Moses,* and proclaimed this to be his proper title: *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth: keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.*

But least this goodness should be so misconstrued as to diminish our apprehensions of the evil of sin; lest it should lead us to imagine, that, where so much favour is shewn to the workers of iniquity, there can be no abhorrence of it; the Scripture is strong, forcible,

and frequent in its representations of the *holiness* of God.

By his holiness is meant, that disposition essential to his perfect nature, which regards the honour of his own divine perfections; and which therefore opposes the violation of his will, or the resistance of his government. As the power of God is opposed to all natural weakness, and his wisdom to the least defect of understanding; so is his holiness opposed to all moral imperfection or sin. It is not to be considered as a single perfection, but rather as the harmony of all the attributes of God; it is therefore called the *beauty of the Lord.* Psalm xxvii. Separate from Holiness, all other excellencies of the divine Nature would be inglorious. His wisdom might be styled subtilty; his power be only considered as terrific. On this account, those exalted spirits who are best acquainted with the glories of the divine nature, dwell on this perfection. The courts of heaven resound with high adoration, whilst they cry, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!* And such a particular regard do we find paid to this attribute by the blessed God himself, that he swears by it, in confirmation of the promises of grace: *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.* Psalm lxxxix. 35.

Connected with this divine perfection of holiness in God, is the continual notice he takes of the behaviour of each individual towards himself and his law. On this part of his character the necessity of our absolute subjection depends. For were God either ignorant of what is done by men on earth, or did he judge it insignificant, we should have no more cause to retain any awe of him upon our minds, or to impose any res-

traint upon ourselves, than if there were no God. It is not the existence of a God, but his moral government of the world, that calls for our fear, and should excite us to obedience. To remove, therefore, all ground of suspecting any inattention in our Creator to our moral conduct, arising from his own infinite greatness, and our being less than nothing, compared to him—to root out this pernicious opinion, which the desire of sinning with impunity might lead us to cherish; the glorious God teaches us to conceive of him, as taking the most exact cognizance of all our inward tempers, no less than our outward deportment, and that with an unchangeable purpose to deal with us accordingly. In the nervous language of his own inspired penmen, *His eyes behold, and his eye-lids try the children of men. The Lord is a God of knowledge, by him actions are weighed. I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

And lest, from the present outward prosperity of the wicked, any should be unreasonable and base enough to conclude, that God is not such an exact observer of our conduct, respecting himself and his law; the Scriptures are full of this alarming truth, which entirely removes the objection; that *God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or bad—that he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness—that every man shall receive the things done in his body, whether they be good or bad.*

But it is not only at the end of time, and in the day of universal judgment, that God makes a difference between those that serve him, and those that refuse

subjection to his laws. God represents himself as continually exercising peculiar and distinguishing love to his faithful and obedient people, whilst he is insupportably terrible to his obstinate opposers. He is not content with giving to the former, assurances of his good-will towards them, and of their future glory in the eternal world: He declares, that he will maintain with them even here, an intercourse of the most intimate and exalted nature. He will give them such views of the glory of his nature, the excellency of his truth, and the tenderness of his love, as the ungodly and careless neither know nor can conceive. In every season of extraordinary temptation, he is secretly enduing their souls with strength, and giving them power to return from every combat triumphing in conquest, and from every trial enriched with more grace. A considerable part of Scripture is taken up with representing the peculiar favour and loving-kindness of God to his faithful servants. A few passages will give us just conceptions of this part of the character of the most high God: *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ear is open to their cry. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way—though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand, for the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever. The Lord is a light and defence, he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that lead a godly life. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant. The Lord sitteth above the water-floods, the Lord remaineth a king for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will give his*

people the blessing of peace. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

The substance of these inestimable mercies, is most emphatically expressed in the New Testament, and confirmed afresh as the portion of all true believers. *If any man love me,* saith our Lord, *he will keep my commandments; and I and the Father will love him, and will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* The enjoyment of such a peculiar manifestation of God's love is used by the inspired St. Paul, as a most cogent argument, to engage men, even at a time of extreme peril and approaching persecution, to forsake the idolatrous religion of their parents: *Wherefore,* saith he, *come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty.*

Weigh well the import of these declarations of favour to the children of God, and you will see, in the clearest light, how much the God of heaven and earth regards the conduct of every individual, who faithfully receives his truth. He is not ashamed to call himself, in every instance, the friend of such, their portion, their father, their exceeding great reward. He is not ashamed to engage his own word and oath, that he will never leave them nor forsake them; but, on the contrary, that he will crown all his goodness towards them here, by calling them up hereafter into his immediate presence and glory.

On the other hand, it is as striking a demonstration of the notice which God takes of men's practice and deportment, that he will punish in the most awful manner those who are enemies to his government, and despise his authority. Hear in what terms he proclaims his hatred of iniquity, and his unchangeable purpose to execute his vengeance upon sinners; and doubt, if you can, whether God is concerned to maintain his own honour. *The Lord your God, is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh rewards. If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand lay hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces, out of heaven shall he thunder upon them. God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. Upon the ungodly he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be their portion to drink: for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance will behold the thing that is just. The Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots; like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebukes with flames of fire; for by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many. And they shall go forth, and look upon the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

To comment on these nervous expressions would be to enfeeble them. To suppose them figurative expres-

sions, in such a sense as not most emphatically to affirm God's utter abhorrence of sin, and his determined purpose to cast into hell those who die in their sins, is, in fact, to contradict them. Instead of cavilling at them, or vainly endeavouring to explain them away, let us receive them with awe and fear. This is the end which they are intended to produce. *Hear ye, and give ear, for the Lord hath spoken: behold, I will execute judgment; vengeance is mine, I will repay.*

If any additional proof were wanting to confute the false and dangerous opinion of those who vainly suppose the Deity to be all mercy; and who pretend to be shocked at the notion of a God who will not let the wicked pass unpunished; it may be derived from the attestations of our Saviour—the only-begotten of the Father, who cannot deceive, who has shewn the perfection of benevolence towards sinners, since he laid down his life for them on the cross; he has confirmed, by his own declarations, all the denunciations of wrath above-mentioned. He declares, that, in the last day, all nations shall be gathered before him, and at that most solemn time, in the hearing of the whole rational creation, he will say to all them on the left hand, that is, to the vast multitudes of obstinate and incorrigible sinners, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.**

* See Prayer the *Eighth.*

SUNDAY IV. CHAPTER IV.

The Character of God exemplified.

IN our last chapter we have the character of God, given by his own inspired penmen. We have seen that they represent him as a being merciful and yet just; merciful, even abounding in grace towards his obedient children; but just to those who despise him, in bringing upon them all the curses written in his book. By this disposition towards both, he appears infinitely holy and reverend, and his character gives the greatest encouragement to the exercise of faith in his name, and to the practice of righteousness for his sake.

But if the character of God were only delineated by his own declarations, we should be apt (such is our nature) to be only faintly impressed by it. To give it weight sufficient to regulate our practice, *the character must be made still more conspicuous by actions.* There must be facts, established upon such authority, that we can no more question their truth, than if with our own eyes we had seen them performed: facts expressive of the very same perfections in God, of which his word, declares him to be possessed. Accordingly the method of God's procedure, both with angels and men, is an additional and the strongest confirmation possible that he is good, merciful, and holy; that he abounds in love towards his faithful people, but is the dreadful avenger of iniquity.

With respect to the *goodness of God*, it shines forth

in all the excellencies which *angels* possess; and all the bliss they inherit, who have never fallen from God, nor left that glorious habitation he of his bounty provided for them.

On man, as he came immediately out of the hands of his Creator, and while he stood in his first estate, the signatures of the divine goodness were so strongly impressed, as to excite envy in one who had himself experienced the happiness of angels.—Adam was created full of light and knowledge, of purity and peace, of delight and felicity. He was formed in the image of God; he was invested with dominion over the animal creation. He was not only conscious of the favour of his infinitely powerful and beneficent Creator, but he was admitted to hold personal communion with him. Thus was he made only a little lower than the angels themselves, who shouted for joy at the display of the goodness of God, manifested in the happiness of man. In this state of perfection Adam stood: he was put in possession of it for himself and all his progeny; incapable of forfeiting or diminishing it but by his own wilful apostacy.

Now, who can consider this account of man's original happiness, and not admire the benevolence of Him who was the author of it? Who can survey the riches of the inheritance provided for Adam, compared to which, the glory of Solomon was but as the wretchedness of a captive exile, and not adore the infinite goodness of the Creator?

Again; when Adam, through the envy and malice of the devil, operating in a manner too mysterious for us to comprehend, revolted from his Maker, and re-

quited his bounty with the execrable insult of believing Satan to be a better friend to his welfare than God; though the hideous deed could not but draw innumerable miseries after it; yet, even then, behold the goodness of God shone brighter than it did even at the first creation, and *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* God instantly revives our most criminal and desponding parents with a promise of salvation. He promises, O astonishing love! *to send an invincible deliverer into the world, even* His own Son! To send him into the world, not to receive the worship due unto his name; not to be adored by every heart, as the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, but to be defamed as a confederate with Satan, crucified as a blasphemer, and to die, being made a curse for us. *Herein is love! not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Could God say of his most corrupt and idolatrous people, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together?* What then must be the operations of his love towards his own Son, the perfect image of himself, when he *delivered him up for our offences?* when he seemed as it were to divest himself of the qualities of a father towards his son, and, for our sakes, to assume the severe character of a judge. *Herein God commendeth his love:* he places it in the most advantageous point of view, in which it can possibly be seen by angels or by men, *in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!* The conclusion resulting from this amazing demonstration of goodness and mercy, the sending his Son *to suffer for the unjust, and to bear*

our sins in his own body on the tree; the conclusion is irresistible. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?*

And as the great God has thus by his actions proved himself to be good and merciful, so has he in the same way demonstrated that *he is a holy God.* For once, his word informs us, there was war in heaven, Satan and his angels rising up in enmity against their Maker. The apostates, from the brightness of glory which they possessed, were called *stars of heaven;** yet, no sooner did they sin, than they were stripped of all their honours, and clothed with shame and everlasting contempt: from the height of happiness they were plunged into an abyss of misery: between them and God an impassable gulph was fixed, so that no means of reconciliation will be ever found, no terms of peace be ever offered to them. *God,* saith St. Peter, *spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.* This single fact is a sufficient demonstration that the Lord our God is holy. For if a king, famed for wisdom and mercy, should command persons of the first distinction around his throne to be cast into dungeons, and loaded with fetters, refusing ever to look on them again with favour, or hear a word in mitigation of their punishment; must not all his subjects conclude their offence was most detestable? And can we draw any other conclusion, when we read that the God who delighteth in mercy has, in the greatness

* Rev. xii. 4.

of his displeasure, cast down from their thrones, where his own hand had placed them, so many celestial beings, and made them examples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire?

Another display of the holiness of God, in which all the children of men have been deeply interested, is the *execution of the punishment threatened to Adam* our first parent. The threat was, that, upon disobedience, he should immediately suffer death. This death consisted in the loss of the image of God, in which he was created; his body, after some years spent in toil and sorrow, returning to the dust from whence it was taken; and his soul, unless renewed after the image of God, enduring the pains of eternal death. The latter part of the penalty, we trust, he escaped, through the Mediator so graciously revealed to him; but of the accomplishment of the former part we, alas! are witnesses at this very hour. For what have we, in the place of Adam's original power, but weakness and helplessness? What, for his divine light and knowledge, but brutish ignorance? What, instead of his peace and communion with God, but natural dislike to him, and rebellious discontent and fear concerning the divine proceedings? What, instead of his perfect purity, but a heart so deceitful, and so desperately wicked, that God alone can know it? And, in the place of an Eden, contrived by infinite wisdom for delight and spiritual happiness, what but a world of confusion and sin, a field of battle, a vale of misery!

If you ask, whence came this total reverse of circumstances between the first man in innocence, and his posterity? God, who in justice ordained it, gives you this awful account of it: *By the offence of one,*

judgment came upon all men to condemnation—by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners. Ponder this in your heart, and you will not be able to refrain from crying out, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.*

Farther, the dreadful *execution of God's wrath upon all the world,* puts the holiness of his nature beyond dispute. Before the death, even of all the children of those, who saw Adam for his sin an outcast from Paradise, the fountains of the great deep are broken up, the windows of heaven are opened to destroy the whole human race then upon earth, except eight persons. And lest this destruction should not be judged the act and deed of God himself, as the holy Governor of the world, and as a punishment for its sin, hear the God of all mercy, the giver of every good and perfect gift, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, hear him declaring his awful purpose and assigning its cause. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth. And it repented the Lord that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them.*

There is yet one fact more, so demonstrative of the holiness of God, as to eclipse the destruction of the antediluvian world, the fall of man, the ruin of the apostate angels. For, in all these cases, the sufferers were first actual transgressors and rebels against God. But if you *look to* THE CROSS OF CHRIST, there you will see the Beloved of the Father, one infinitely more holy than the holiest of the angels in heaven, *set forth* by God *to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood,*

to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, that he might be just, might appear to the eyes of men and angels, glorious in holiness or justice, *and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus.*

We have appealed, and we shall again and again appeal to the death of Jesus upon the cross, yet we hope without tautology; since this marvellous fact, considered in different views, affords the strongest proof of various perfections in God. At present it is urged in demonstration of God's infinite hatred of sin. And in this light it may be well illustrated by a passage of sacred history. In the second book of *Kings*,* we read that the Moabites fled before the kings of Israel and Judah, and after a great slaughter were forced with their king to retire into their city. Here the king, finding himself besieged and reduced to the last extremity, had recourse to an astonishing act to shew his distress, and his indignation against Israel. He took his eldest son, the heir of his kingdom, and in the sight of his enemies offered him up for a burnt-offering upon the wall. The action succeeded to his wish; the kings of Israel and Judah were amazed and confounded at the fury which urged him to such a deed, and returned immediately with haste to their own country, as if pursued by a conqueror.

Now this example, taken in one point of view, may be applied to illustrate the subject before us. For the eternal Father, having used promises and threatenings, judgments and mercies, and still seeing our sins reach up to heaven, besieging as it were his almighty throne, expresses infinite indignation against sin—He takes his

* Chap. iii. 26.

only begotten Son, the heir of all things, the express image of his person, and, in the hearing of heaven and earth, cries out, *Awake, O sword! and smite my shepherd, the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.* Should not we, then, always remembering the death of his only begotten Son, for our transgressions, smite upon our breasts, and go and sin no more! Should not we serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, feeling, from this fact, that, to impenitent sinners, our God will be a consuming fire!

In the last chapter we produced from Scripture many declarations of *the peculiar love exercised by God* towards each individual that walks before him faithfully. For instances to illustrate these, we may appeal to the history of his providence, from the earliest ages. Enoch, the seventh in the line of direct descent from Adam, because he was unconquerably attached to the truth and authority of God, in the midst of his rebellious kindred, is taken from them in a way which at once immortalizes his name, and proclaims the love which God bears to his saints. Before this fact could grow faint or obscure, Noah is lifted up to our observation, like the ark in which he was preserved, for an everlasting memorial, that in the most desolating judgments, the care of each individual saint is with the most High. In the case of righteous Lot, the same distinguishing love of God is again manifested; and two assertions are made by God upon this occasion, which are peculiarly expressive of his character towards his faithful people; the one is, that Sodom itself would have been spared for the sake of only ten righteous, if but so small a number had been found within its walls. The other is, that Lot is hurried

away from thence with this declaration, *Haste thee, escape; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither.*

And in what other light than as confirmations of the character of God, that he approveth the way of the righteous, and hath had in all ages the most tender and affectionate regard for their welfare; in what other light are we to consider the surprising history of the faithful Joseph? the favour shewn to Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and to them only of all Israel who came out of Egypt, or the remarkable and numerous deliverances of David from the snares and persecutions of Saul? In what other point of view are we to consider Elijah's miraculous assumption into heaven, before the eyes of his successor in office the prophet Elisha? What other conclusion are we to draw from the preservation of Daniel in the den of lions, and of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego in the fiery furnace? What are these but witnesses chosen of God, and distinguished by miracles wrought in their favour, that every obedient servant of God, who copies the pattern they set before him, may know that he is, as certainly as they were, the object of God's peculiar care and paternal love? And though we see not now the course of nature is over-ruled for the deliverance of the faithful, still the comprehensive promise of the unchangeable God abideth sure; *He knoweth them that are his,* and will *make all things work together for good to them that love him.*

Nor are the facts which attest God's utter hatred of the sin of each individual, few in number or of doubtful import. On the contrary, the record of his actions furnishes us with many awful instances of the

immediate execution of justice on daring offenders. There is scarcely a sin which has not been singled out as the object of his wrathful displeasure. Thus Ham, that could insult his father, surprised by accident into intoxication, is accursed; Lot's wife, full of worldly cares, and looking back upon the loss of her property with regret and repining, is turned into a pillar of salt. Envy and aspiring pride bring down immediate destruction upon Corah, Dathan, and Abiram. In Achan's fate, and in Gehazi's leprosy, we see how God abhorreth the covetous. Behold, thou infamous advocate for fornication, the javelin of Phineas avenging God's quarrel upon Zimri and Cosbi: renounce thy fond conceit, that whoremongers will not be judged by God; for see, three-and-twenty thousand persons are cut off by him for this sin in one day. Be astonished at the patience of God towards thee, thou false and lying tongue, when thou readest that Ananias and Sapphira perished with the breath of falsehood in their lips! Take notice, thou despiser of Jesus, of the doom of thy fellow-criminal Elymas the sorcerer, and the judicial blindness with which he was smitten while he perverted the way of truth. Understand, ye vain and haughty, from the ignominious death of Herod, that a proud heart is an abomination to the Lord, and that self-exaltation on account of gifts or pre-eminence of any kind, is what he cannot endure: for behold, the royal deified orator, after the shout of blasphemous applause from the multitude, is immediately smitten by the angel of the Lord, *because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.*

All these instances, and many more recited in Scrip-

ture, prove with irresistible force, that wherever envy or malice, covetousness or pride, profaneness, impurity, or any temper opposite to the law of God prevails, there the wrath of God abideth; and there, unless they are subdued before death, must it abide for ever!

Such, in his natural and moral perfections, such, in his government and providence towards his whole rational creation, is the true God. And that *there is only one God,* who is in all, and through all, and over all, the Scripture is most express. *I, even I am he, and there is no God with me. Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.* But then the same Scripture teaches us, that this unity of God is not an unity of person but of essence, in which the Son and the Spirit are comprehended; in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal with the Father. Without all controversy great is this mystery of godliness. It must however be received: because the Scripture ascribes those very perfections, in which the nature of God surpasses that of created beings, to the Son and the Spirit. Eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, are represented to belong to them: they therefore with the Father are to be worshipped and glorified. This God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is the God of the Christians. While Jews abhor this mystery, while Mahometans persecute it as an abomination, while the self-conceited reject it with disdain; the Christian church, acquiescing in the plain word of God, and satisfied with his declarations, dedicates herself to the sacred Three in One. She continually concludes her public worship with professing her desire to

partake of the distinct and different blessings, which are imparted to the church by each of these sacred Three, entreating that the *love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, may be with us all.*

Having thus concluded our inquiries concerning the nature and perfections of the most High God, as they are delineated in Scripture, it remains, that we should *examine and prove ourselves,* whether our idea of God be a faithful copy of the Scripture pattern. Let us try whether we do not remain in gross and fatal ignorance of his real character, notwithstanding the complete manner in which he has revealed himself in his own most holy word. Take it by no means for granted, that you really possess the knowledge of God: for thousands who are utterly destitute of it, who entertain notions of his character which are abominable in his sight, thus flatter themselves to their own ruin. Search, therefore, and examine whether you heartily acknowledge God to be what he has declared that he is, in those particulars in which pride, the love of sin, or unbelief, are most apt to misrepresent his real character.

For instance; do you look upon God as bearing that perfect abhorrence to all iniquity, which the Bible affirms him to bear? Is it a truth stedfastly fixed in your mind, that God is not cruel to the work of his own hands, though he doom every soul of man dying in sin to feel for ever the weight of his indignation? Do you confess from the heart, that the sanctions of his government are full of righteousness and glory, though, they assure you, that, to every hypocrite and unbeliever, our God is a consuming fire?

Again: examine yourself, whether you are firmly

persuaded, that the God whom you worship is a support and defence to every one that believeth on the name of his Son with an obedient heart? Are you sure that the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, humbleth himself to watch every moment over each individual of the faithful for good, and careth for every one of that character at all times, as a wise father doth for the son that serveth him? Do you believe it as a most certain truth, that God doth indeed dwell with men, and that he giveth to all who are living according to his will, such peace and consolation as the world knoweth not? Finally, try yourself, whether you have affecting views of the love of God, as it manifests itself in the person and offices of the Redeemer, in the influences of the Spirit, and in that communion which God thus holds with all his faithful people.

By such inquiries as these, honestly made, your real knowledge of your ignorance of the God of whom the Bible speaks, will be discovered to yourself. It is in these important points that God has made that revelation of himself, and of his conduct towards us, which the world by wisdom could never have discovered. And in the same proportion as God's own representation of himself and of his designs are believed, you will be really enriched by the knowledge of him. Such a knowledge is inestimable: it possesses virtue to heal the corrupted mind of man, and energy to support it amidst numerous trials, and to keep it firm in the exercise of duty; it is this knowledge, in a word, which is emphatically pronounced by our Saviour to be eternal life.*

* See Prayer the *Eighth.*

SUNDAY V. CHAPTER V.

The natural Condition of Man with respect to God.

NO science can be thoroughly known till its first principles are well understood. This observation is never more true than when applied to religion, the science in which every man is most deeply interested. One of the first and most necessary principles of religion is, a knowledge of our own condition and character, especially as we stand related to the Author of our being.

Now, experience and Scripture, those incontestible witnesses, jointly declare *the deplorable blindness of man in spiritual things, while in a state of nature;* and his forgetfulness, contempt, nay, even hatred of his Creator.

His *blindness* is manifested by his practical denial of his absolute dependence upon God for all good. He looks upon the endowments of person, mind, or station, as if they were in the proper sense of the word his own; he trusts in his own wisdom and strength to procure them, and when procured, he glories in them as his own acquirement. In words indeed he acknowledges one supreme universal Creator; but he considers not the consequence necessarily resulting from this truth to the glory of God, *that of him, and through him, and to him are all things.* Hence beauty is intoxicated with the admiration of its own pleasing form; hence the rich, proud of their wealth, look with con-

tempt on the poor; and those who have acquired knowledge by intense application, or who shine distinguished by their superior genius, spurn the ignorant vulgar; nay, even the Christian is much too ready to exalt himself in the flattering survey of his own spiritual acquirements. The universal prevalence of this spirit of self-sufficiency loudly proclaims the blindness of the human mind to that fundamental truth, that *no man can receive* any *thing except it be given him from above.* With respect then to every advantage to which we affix a value, *it is God only that maketh men to differ.* But so gross is this blindness, and so truly is it a property of our nature, that it is difficult even with all the aids of supernatural light and divine grace, to obtain deliverance from it. Some symptoms of it may be found (where you least suspect them) even in the most enlightened of the earth.

The natural blindness of man with respect to God, may be proved also by *the judgment he makes of a life of obedience, and a life of self-indulgence.* Compare these together, and you would not even believe it possible to make a wrong choice. For what is a life of obedience to God? It is paying our allegiance to the wisest, the best of Kings, and duly discharging our filial duty to the most affectionate of Fathers. It is freedom to the fettered soul, and deliverance from passions as base as they are hurtful. It ensures that peace and tranquillity of mind, which affords no ground for sharp self-upbraidings. It makes a man a blessing to all in connection with him, and effectually restrains him even from the intention of evil. In prosperity, it keeps the mind humble; in adversity, calm and patient: nor can the prospect of death disturb its tran-

quillity, for its hope is full of immortality.—Survey now its contrast, a life of self-indulgence. How depraved, how monstrous is every feature! The whole appears no other than an hideous compound of ignorance, obstinately contradicting infinite wisdom; of contempt shewn by a sinful worm to eternal majesty; of ingratitude to bounty the most undeserved; of rebellion aiming its blow against supreme mercy. A life of self-indulgence makes a man afraid to look into himself, or forwards to approaching eternity: It is infectious and full of mischief to others; it is wholly without excuse, and in every view altogether odious.

What light then can there be left in the human mind, if a life of obedience is not always, with hesitation, preferred, infinitely preferred, to a life of self-indulgence? For beauty, in its loveliest bloom, doth not so evidently excel pale loathsome disease, as a life of faithful obedience surpasses one of self-gratification.

Yet, alas! to the shame of man, experience daily proves his choice to be fixed on what merits absolute contempt, and his preference to be given where detestation alone is due. Innumerable are the slanders with which man asperses a life of strict obedience, and loud are the complaints he urges against it: he industriously employs all his powers of wit and reason to make an uniform subjection to the will of God appear irksome,—and opposition to it guiltless.

In vain do all the children of obedience lift up their voice together, and cry, *Great is the peace that they have who keep thy law, and nothing shall offend them.* In vain does the all-sufficient Jehovah promise his indwelling presence and Spirit; in vain does he promise

pardon, power, peace, and salvation to the faithful and obedient; all is too weak to open the eyes of men in general, and to enable them to perceive such pleasure and such charms in the way of duty, as they fondly fancy they discover in the paths of self-will and transgression. And to this gross mistake it is owing, that the number of real Christians is so small, the multitude of open sinners so great.

This observation leads us to a farther discovery of the blindness natural to the human mind, with respect to *what it esteems the true foundation of happiness.* Were it a fact, that great possessions, titles, or appearances could satisfy the soul, it might then be no proof of human blindness to seek for happiness in what the world can give, to the neglect or disparagement of God: or were we, like the heathen, left in gross darkness about the perfections of God, and ignorant of the notice he takes of his creatures; on either of these suppositions it would be no evidence of blindness in man to reject, as imaginary, the prospect of finding happiness in the knowledge of God, and in a lively consciousness of his favour. He might plead, that it were the height of arrogance and presumption to imagine there could be an intimacy and friendship between him and God.

But when, on the contrary, the infallible Scriptures fully display to us the glorious perfections of our God, and when they assure us also of the high place man holds in his thoughts; when they declare that his heart is open to embrace him, as soon as he earnestly desires deliverance from sin, and to treat him with all the endearments a son can receive from the most indulgent father—in such a case, must not the mind be deplorably infatuated, if it does not listen with delight to

these declarations, place confidence in them, and instantly accept the rich offer made by them as a treasure of peace, of happiness, and glory? Yet, alas! far from acting in this most reasonable manner, we are with great difficulty brought to believe that God does indeed dwell with man; and with still greater, to desire any share of communion with him. After a thousand disappointments from the world, still with boundless credulity we depend upon delusion for happiness. The meanest trifle, the most sordid pursuit, every thing, except the knowledge and love of God, we are blind enough to fancy worth our esteem and our labour to obtain.

Thus does gross ignorance darken the mind of fallen man. Every inferior creature, even the crawling worm or buzzing insect, perceives what is most beneficial for itself, steadily pursues and constantly adheres to it. But man is naturally blind to the Source of all good, and to the enjoyment he can possess through the knowledge and love of him. Even men of the finest abilities, whose penetration, in other respects, is piercing as the eagle's sight, are in this point miserably blind. Gross darkness covers the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the priest and the people, till God commands the light to shine out of darkness, and bestows from on high, a sound understanding and right judgment.

This blindness of the human mind is most strongly asserted in the following Scriptures, to which more of the same kind, were it necessary might be added: Job xi. 12. *Man is born like the wild ass's colt,* that is, not only destitute of heavenly light and wisdom, but stupid

to apprehend it, and averse to receive it. Observe how keenly this is pointed: *like the ass*—an animal remarkable for its stupidity even to a proverb; like the ass's *colt*, which of course must be more egregiously stupid than the dam; like the *wild* ass's colt, which is not only dull, but stubborn and refractory, neither by nature possessing valuable qualities, nor capable of receiving them by any discipline. The same blindness, natural to the human mind, is necessarily implied in those assertions of the Lord Jesus Christ, which ascribe all discernment of spiritual things to the influence of the Holy Ghost: which style him the Spirit of Truth, whose office it is to lead us into all truth. Nay, sufficiently decisive on this point, if there were no other testimony, is that remarkable one of St. Paul: *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

But it is not blindness only that is chargeable on fallen man; *his entire forgetfulness of God*, even though the *whole creation* loudly attests his excellency and his presence, argues extreme depravity. Man can be a witness to the whole host of heaven moving in continual order around him; he can enjoy the grateful vicissitude of the seasons, and feast upon the various bounties of the earth; he can stand encircled with conveniencies and comforts, and yet not advert to the infinitely wise and gracious hand that made and sustains all things. He excludes God from the government of his own world, because not subject to the observation of his senses, and ascribes the honour due to him, to those passive instruments which only subserve his will.

When God therefore would impress a nation with any heartfelt awe of his agency and rule over the affairs of men, he is compelled to send forth his judgments on the earth, which, like a glaring comet, troubling the sky by its irregular motion and portentous appearance, may arrest the attention, alarm the fears, and lead the thoughts of man to his Maker. When he would recover an individual from that deep forgetfulness of him in which he lies by nature, he must change his prosperity into trouble, and his joy into heaviness; he must confine him to a chamber of sickness, or on a bed of languishing must teach him to know himself: he must scourge him with pain, or by fearful apprehensions of impending punishment must awaken the sleeper into sensibility. Still, however, even after these severe monitors have faithfully performed their office, and forcibly set before man his adorable Creator, the remembrance of him, alas! is apt to pass away like that of a guest who tarries but a day.

It passes away, though all nature unite to exhibit him to the senses. "Whilst the sun, clothed in tran-
"scendent brightness, comes forth from his chamber
"every morning to publish his Maker's glory; whilst
"the moon and stars, which govern the night, add
"their united evidence to magnify their Creator to a
"gazing but unaffected world: whilst the air whispers
"his clemency in the balmy refreshing gale, or his
"majesty sounds aloud in roaring winds and rending
"storms: yet both expedients fail; man is like the
"deaf adder that stoppeth her ears, he refuseth to hear
"the voice of the charmers, charm they ever so sweet-
"ly, ever so forcibly. Each flower, arrayed in beau-

" ty and breathing perfume, courts our affections for " its infinitely amiable Author; not a bird that war- " bles, or a brook that murmurs, but invites our " praise or chides our ingratitude. All the variety of " fruits deposit their attestation on our palates, yet " seldom reach our hearts; they give us a proof of " the benign benignity, as undeniable as it is pleasing, " and too often as ineffectual also. In short, the whole " creation is a kind of magnificent embassy from its al- " mighty Lord, deputed to proclaim his excellencies, " and demand our homage:" Yet man, such is the depravity of his mind, disregards the former, and of consequence withholds the latter.

It may be said, these instances of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in the creation, are silent and inarticulate witnesses, and therefore fail to engage the attention of man. Alas! then his forgetfulness of his Maker is stubborn enough to withstand even louder calls. Behold! *the messenger of the Lord*, with heaven-enkindled zeal in his heart and fire in his eyes, addresses him; he pleads before him the cause of God and truth; he makes his earnest appeal to reason, to man's own experience, whether God ought to be forgotten? He sets the Father of the spirits of all flesh before him, in the supreme glory of his character and the overflowing riches of his grace; yet the force of the impression abides no longer than till the next earthly trifle occurs, or the favourite object of pursuit presents itself to the mind. Either can scatter every idea of God from his faithless memory, as the wind disperses the chaff.

Nay, when *that holy word* which breathes the majesty of him who inspired it, is read by his minister, man

till renewed by grace, betrays in his whole deportment a flagrant insensibility and a reproachful irreverence toward God. The sons of business are still in idea, buying, selling, and getting gain, as at the exchange or market; the eye of lewdness ceases not, even in the holy assembly, to gratify evil concupiscence: youthful curiosity roves with careless indifference from object to object. Amidst a multitude of professed worshippers of God, only the few who have been happily recovered from their natural insensibility worship him in spirit and in truth. Weigh this fact, too, too frequently occurring, not to fall under your notice; and it will extort a confession from you, that the God, in whose hands is all our life and happiness, for time and for eternity, is more overlooked than the smallest object that concerns our temporal welfare, and more forgotten than the meanest person on whom we have any dependence.

We have seen, then, that it is the way of man to live in forgetfulness of God. But let not this forgetfulness be considered as the effect of mere inattention, a venial failing which, though it ought to be corrected, argues no corrupt nature—No, *it is highly culpable:* it arises entirely from a depravity of disposition. Are we wont to be obstinately inattentive to our friends, while any degree of veneration remains for them? When the Lord of a great household is absent, and therefore invisible to his servants, do they lose the remembrance of their duty unless they are wholly base and profligate? When children are separated from their affectionate parents, though even at the distance of whole kingdoms, can they lose a lively remembrance of their relation, or a sense of their obligations, unless

they are sunk into total degeneracy? If we trace therefore man's forgetfulness of God up to its real source, it will afford us still more afflicting evidence of his natural depravity, and prove *he is a despiser of the Lord God omnipotent.*

Neither let ignorance of the nature of God, and of the homage he requires from men, be pleaded as an excuse for our forgetfulness—For has not reason remonstrated against our sin? Has not the word of God distinctly pointed out its malignity? Have not undeniable facts proved, that God, notwithstanding his infinite greatness, inspects our conduct with the most minute attention? No earthly potentate can shew himself so observant of the manners of his subjects, so jealous of the honour of his laws, as the King eternal, immortal, and invisible. For ask and inquire under heaven, from the beginning of the world unto this day, who is he among the princes of this world, that has so fully prohibited all that is evil, or so strictly enjoined the practice of all good, as the Lord of the whole earth? who has added penalties to deter from presumptuous offences against his laws, worthy to be compared to everlasting burnings? In what state are such rich preferments, such desirable honours, insured to loyalty and obedience, as in the kingdom of our God? or, to say no more, who among the kings of the earth, in all the fierceness of his wrath, has been found so terrible to avenge his quarrel, as the righteous God, in his judgments that have been executed upon sinners?

Our forgetfulness therefore of so great a God, who has so plainly and fully manifested his authority, is sinful, and an instance of high depravity. It is no less

than contempt of God, and as such, is a crime infinitely heinous. To shew contempt to a person who is in any degree our superior, is a greater offence, all will allow, than if he were our equal. To offer an affront to a crowned head, a much greater offence than to a private man—as every act of honour derives its value from the dignity of him who confers it, so an offence is dishonourable and base, in proportion to the character of him against whom it is committed. The consequence then is plain, that to shew contempt to God, is an infinite offence; for almighty power, rendered lovely by an essential union with perfect wisdom, justice, and mercy, constitutes the nature of God, and demands the heartfelt adoration of his creatures. To question whether such an adoration be due to him, argues a profligate stupidity of mind; but to act as if he were unworthy of fear and love, is yet more flagitious wickedness.

But that it is the custom of man thus to act, you may see in the clearest light, wherever you turn your eyes. Consider the multitudes who are living in the open breach of one or other of the laws of God. Are they doing so because they are ignorant that their sin is forbidden? No.—Profane swearers know what the third Commandment requires, and by what Lawgiver it is enacted; the intemperate are acquainted with the Scripture which denounces woes on those *whose God is their belly, and who are mighty to drink wine;* the lewd are no strangers to that awful declaration, *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;* nor fraudulent tradesmen to that solemn appeal, *Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*

But notwithstanding these plain peremptory decla-

rations, fraud, intemperance, and profaneness have ever covered almost the whole face of the earth—and sinners of each of the above-mentioned classes, though entreated, though importuned, though adjured in the name of God, who made, who preserves, and who will judge them; not only refuse to hearken, but rage in confidence of their own safety. By this conduct man foams out his own shame, and proves that, where he can neither plead ignorance, nor forgetfulness, he will dare to treat the commands of God, as if he thought them the wild injunctions of passion, the impositions of tyranny, or the dictates of folly. He will dare to treat the law of his Maker, as if, in some instances, at least respecting himself, it were absurd in its objects, unreasonable in its restraints, unnecessary to be observed, and violable with impunity.

It is in vain for man to reply, while he remains a wilful transgressor of the law, that it is far from his intention to be guilty of contempt towards God;—he only means to please himself in his sin. For where the law of God is openly declared, as it is in every Christian country, it is impossible to do the one without being guilty of the other also. A rebellious spirit cannot possibly discover a more flagrant contempt of God's government, than by first concluding, that it will be his interest to walk contrary to his commandment; and then, while doing so, making light of the wrath revealed in the most solemn manner against all the unrighteousness and ungodliness of men.

But in whatever point of view man may himself regard his practice of sin, it is beyond dispute that *the eternal God looks upon it in a most serious light*, and will punish it as a contempt of his authority. He re-

presents himself as so indignant at the unprovoked and inexcusable rebellion of sinners, that he becomes inexorable to their cries, and regardless of the dreadful miseries, into the abyss of which they are ready to fall: *Because I have called,* by my spirit, my law, and my ministers, *and ye refused;* because, like one vehemently desirous to be obeyed, *I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.* But *ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you.* Prov. i. 24—27. In this passage you observe the Almighty expressing, in the most alarming manner, the contempt and scorn he will shew towards obstinate sinners, as only the just retaliation upon them of the very same usage and treatment he has received so long at their hands.

What has been offered proves but too fully the natural depravity of man. There is no way of refuting it, but by affirming that it implies no baseness to behave towards the Fountain of all good with forgetfulness, and to treat Excellency itself with contempt. But wherever there should be impiety enough to maintain such a shocking assertion, there would also be a living demonstration of the truth that was contradicted.*

* See Prayer the *Ninth.*

SUNDAY VI. CHAPTER VI.

The natural Enmity of Man against God.

THE deplorable blindness of man in his natural condition, his neglect and contempt of God have been already stated; but there is still, alas! something worse chargeable upon us all, till created again in Christ Jesus. This I should carefully conceal, if it were my aim merely to please my Reader, instead of bringing him thoroughly acquainted with himself. I know that what I am going to prove upon fallen man, is extremely offensive to natural pride. I remember well the time, when my own self-complacency would have been provoked at such a charge as I now bring against the human race. Let me then entreat the candour of the Reader to believe that I would most conscientiously avoid imputing to fallen man, more sinfulness than Scripture and experience fully warrant: let me also humbly request to be esteemed no less benevolent than if I maintained that man was born with perfect rectitude of soul. I should with the greatest pleasure embrace that opinion, if fact and the express testimony of God did not compel me to renounce it as a dangerous delusion.

Having thus endeavoured to procure an unprejudiced hearing of my arguments, I am bold to open to the bottom the deplorable corruption of human nature, and to maintain that there dwells in the heart of every man, till changed by grace, *an aversion to the very Author of his being*. This is an accusation of so

detestable a kind, that even those, who are most visibly under the power of a dreadful depravity of mind, will not allow its truth. But the proofs I shall bring *are such as every one would allow sufficiently to demonstrate aversion in any other case.* And after these proofs are laid before you, you shall then hear *the infallible decisions of the word of God.*

You will allow then that *wherever the company of persons confessedly wise, excellent, and amiable, is distasteful and irksome,* there is ground to conclude that it arises from some personal dislike. Now secret prayer, and reading the Scriptures with humility and attention, are the nearest approach to God, the most like being in his company of any thing of which we are at present capable. By these therefore we are said in Scripture *to seek his face,* and *come into his presence.* If therefore an aversion to holding such intercourse as this with God, can be proved natural to fallen man, it evidently proves his aversion to him; for none can dispute the wisdom of God or his glorious excellence.

By this test try the human race in every stage of life, and say, where are the young people, where are the old, who, before they are divinely renewed, have any delight in prayer and reading the Scripture? I do not say they totally neglect them; but do they not repeat their prayers in haste, without serious attention to their meaning? Is not the Bible, that authentic account of God and his wonderful works, a dull tasteless book, and therefore neglected? If it is read, are not a few minutes thought time enough for such a task, whilst hours are every day consumed with delight in idle sauntering, in frivolous visits, or in frothy entertainments? If this conduct doth not, what can

demonstrate the aversion of man to God? especially, since God, amazing condescension! offers to hold communion with us, invites our acquaintance, and would have us regard him as our exceeding joy? Why is this offer slighted? Surely because we naturally like not to retain him in our knowledge, nor to glorify him as God.

Again; it cannot be doubted that a great degree of hatred against a person prevails, when *it extends even to those that are connected with him,* and when attachment to him becomes a cause for breaking the closest bonds of friendship.

Tried by this rule, the natural aversion of man's heart to his glorious Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, appears as flagrant in its effects, as it is detestable in its principle. A zealous spirit of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ may be considered as the expression of a sincere attachment to him; but this spirit is, in all ages of life, offensive to the generality of mankind. Does this uncommon but most excellent disposition discover itself in a child at school, his playmates, as from an instinctive enmity against it, will assault and persecute him with derision. In universities, which furnish education for the world, you may be lewd and intemperate, profane in speech and principle, without offence to your fellow-students; but if, with a becoming fortitude, you refrain from all fashionable sins, and urge the authority of God's law against them, the most cutting ridicule and abusive insult will be heaped upon your conduct.

Now as this is the case, before the corrupt affections of the human heart are strengthened by age or inflamed by indulgence, it must necessarily be much more

so afterwards. It is accordingly a fact, that the real fear and love of God in Christ Jesus, become the cause of variance and separation where the greatest intimacy and the closest friendship subsisted before. Those very persons who, whilst living in fashionable forgetfulness of God, were beloved as most amiable, and even proposed as patterns for imitation—no sooner are divinely changed to delight in the knowledge of God, and his Gospel, than they perceive their careless friends treat them at first with a civil reserve, then proceed to censures of their extravagant piety, and at length discard them entirely from their friendship. But could this be the case if there were no aversion in the heart to God? By no means; for though you may not like your friend's contracting an intimacy with a third person, yet you would not quarrel with him for it, unless you had a secret dislike of that person in your heart.

It is a sure proof of aversion against a person, *when the respectful mention of his name, and the just praise ascribed to him, is not borne without impatience and displeasure.* The party-bigot, every man will allow, overflows with the gall of bitterness; and therefore, when the good qualities of those who are in opposition to his sect become the subject of discourse, he either sits in silent chagrin, or is evidently impatient till another topic of discourse is introduced.

And is it not then a proof of aversion to God, when, amidst all the variety of subjects of discourse, objection is made only against such as are designed to magnify the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? What but aversion to God would immedi-

ately brand such conversations with the odious names of cant and hypocrisy, and obstinately ascribe it to some hateful motive of ostentation or sinister design?

Men are pleased with incessant prating about every the meanest trifle, or most sordid vanity; but as soon as any attempt is made to turn the conversation on the great Lord of the world, his transactions, government, perfections, and love, the very mention of the subject is received in most companies with visible dislike, a disapproving silence ensues, and the subject drops as soon as introduced. Ah! what can demonstrate that the unrenewed heart of man is at enmity with God, if this fact does not, which proclaims so loudly that he is the only person of whom no one chooses to speak, and whose praises no one desires to hear? Could a circle of avowed Atheists desire to have it otherwise?

Again; Who can doubt whether enmity reigns in the heart against an earthly king, when *the tongue is busy in abusing his professed friends, and in casting reproach upon his government,* and the hand is active in opposing it? Can it be doubted then what is the real temper of man's heart towards God the king of the whole earth, before a divine change is experienced, when it is common to hear ridicule poured upon the pious and devout, as creatures absurdly demure, pitiably weak in their judgment, or enthusiastic in their temper? What a malicious insinuation is this against the glory of God? Does it not imply that all who have any concern for his honour are actually under the power of delusion, and truly despicable in their choice and pursuits?

Add to this, that the *disobedience of men to the law of*

God amounts to the strongest proof of aversion to him. Every wilful transgression is an act of controversy with him who forbids it, and of direct opposition to his will; it is expressly styled in Scripture, *rebellion against God.* For though we have no power to overcome our Maker, or to shake the everlasting pillars of his throne; though we cannot bring forth the weapons of our indignation against the visible God, as rebellious subjects can do against their mortal sovereign, yet the bidding defiance to his law demonstrates our will to do this execrable deed. It is an evident declaration that our spirit is in a state of hostility against Heaven. Every open presumptuous offender against God, calls aloud by his practice upon all who behold it, Come on, rise up with me, against the Lord; who is he, that he should reign over us?

Now from these instances, notorious in every place, make an estimate of the natural disposition of man's heart towards God, and then say if it be not evidently that of aversion; and if you allow these instances to be a sufficient demonstration of enmity in every other case, be ingenuous and honest enough to grant it to be such in the present.

To prevail with you to do this, attend farther to *the manner in which our natural state and condition is represented by the God of truth.* He constantly speaks of the children of men, in their unregenerate state, as *haters* of him, as his *adversaries* and *enemies.* *Christ*, we are assured, *died for the ungodly;* that is, for those who were *enemies to God.*

The same truth is positively affirmed, Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal mind* (which the context explains to be the

mind of man in its natural state) is not only disinclined to God, but *enmity* against him; which enmity expresses itself in refusing to be subject to the law of God.

Indeed the Gospel itself, even in one of its most lovely titles, emphatically implies the melancholy truth we are proving. For it is called the ministry of *reconciliation*, that is, a method designed by consummate wisdom, and executed by almighty love, to reconcile us unto God, who were *enemies in our minds* to him *by wicked works*, Col. i. 21. And let the man who would deny the necessity of reconciliation in his own case, descend into his breast and take a full survey of his duty by the light of Scripture, and then say what hope he can have, but from an act of grace in God, receiving him to favour, and putting him in a way of complete redemption by a new birth of the Spirit in the renovation of his heart.

From this proof of the total depravity of man in his temper towards God, his natural guilt and sinfulness appears in a glaring light. For what can be more criminal than such disaffection to God the Father everlasting? It is no less than a total denial of the relation that subsists between the Creator and the creature. It is removing the best and noblest part of the divine workmanship, visible on earth, from its proper basis and centre. If you were to break in pieces the frame of nature, and resolve the world into a mere chaos, the confusion and evil would not be so great, as that of breaking the bonds which unite the Creator to his noblest work, a rational immortal soul. All the relations of creatures towards each other are mean and insignificant, in comparison of those which subsist be-

tween creatures and the Author of their being. Besides, what monstrous wickedness is it to be disaffected to our most bountiful *Benefactor!* What do we think and say of those who have an aversion to their parents? What, when they dislike and shun those who have been ever kind and full of paternal love; are we not wont to brand such ungrateful children with every name of reproach, and to judge them guilty in the highest degree? But in how small a measure do parents contribute to the being and welfare of their children, in comparison of what the great God doth to ours? and how little superiority in point of power and excellency have parents over their children? Whereas the excellency of our Maker surpasses even our highest conceptions.

And *what cause can man pretend* for his disaffection towards God? many good works has he done for us; for which of these is he hated? what injuries have we received from him to offend us? rather may I say, by how many powerful allurements hath he sought to gain our affections? by benefits visible to every eye, repeated day by day in all the comforts and conveniencies of life: by inviting us to the highest degrees of honour and happiness, by giving his only Son to be a sacrifice for our sins.

Disaffection to our Maker comprehends all other wickedness: for as the law of love is the sum and substance of all the precepts, so disaffection to God is comprehensive of all iniquity, since every branch of it may be resolved into this depravity of mind.

If you ask, *what is the use of so strongly representing the natural vileness of man,* and of giving his portrait in

colours so opposite to those in which he is drawn by the flattering pencils of many moral painters? The answer is, that it is only upon the doctrine of the entire corruption of human nature, that the propriety of the capital and peculiar doctrines of the Bible rests. By the capital and peculiar doctrines of Scripture, I understand redemption from the insupportable punishment of sin, acceptance with God only through faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; the illumination of the mind, and a change of disposition by the inward operation of the eternal Spirit.

Against these doctrines you must be strongly prejudiced, or will receive them only as speculative points, till you are sensible that your natural state is exceedingly corrupt. For though your conscience will not suffer you to say you have done no evil, yet, if possessing some civil and moral virtues which gain you esteem amongst men, you believe yourself to be comparatively innocent, you cannot be reconciled to those declarations of Scripture which affirm *eternal death to be the just portion of fallen man.*

Equally averse must you be to embrace the *Gospel method of purification* unto eternal life. The flattering idea of your own merit, and the plausible expectation of greater reformation, will render you too partial to your own righteousness to permit you to approve of the doctrine of salvation by grace; for this is a doctrine infinitely mortifying to human pride: it annuls every plea for mercy but the sufferings and victory of the high and holy Redeemer, who, in absolute pity, undertook to recover fallen man from ruin, by bearing his sin and subduing his enemies. A way of reconciliation this, which is never cordially accepted,

nor effectually used, till all the tempers and dispositions natural to the human mind are confessed to be evil, that is, full of disaffection and enmity against the law of God. Whereas the full conviction of this truth disposes the mind to perceive that it became him, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, in this, and no other way of justifying sinners, to bring many sons unto glory.

Moreover: while it is supposed that men are not by nature deplorably blind to the truths of God, and to his excellency; and in their earliest dispositions rebellious against him; the *doctrine of regeneration,* and of divine grace, as the principle of a new life must appear unnecessary and absurd. For if a man's understanding be not darkened, if by thought and reflection alone he can attain a due knowledge of the truth, he does not then stand in need of foreign help. In this case it were reasonable to urge him to exert his own powers; but to press him to make request for a spirit of wisdom and revelation, were vain and foolish. In the same manner, divine grace can never be conceived necessary to form and fashion the soul anew, unless it be naturally prone to express forgetfulness, contempt, and hatred, towards its glorious Creator. To reform the outward actions, or to lead a life merely sober and honest, requires no such supernatural aid and powerful operation. We daily see many, who despise prayer and the word of God, and are altogether sensual and earthly, yet living in integrity and in quietness with their neighbours: so that it is not with respect to social dispositions that men universally discover their depravity, and their want of a new heart

and a new spirit. But it is that secret impiety which opposes our giving to God the honour, obedience, and supreme love which are due unto his holy name, which renders the agency of the Holy Ghost absolutely necessary. It is the removal and cure of a dreadful disorder which runs in the blood of all the human race, which is interwoven with our corrupted frame, and demands the skill and energy of Him whose power first formed the soul, to restore it again to the image of God.

The conclusion therefore is plain, that as ignorance of our natural condition and character with respect to God prevails, the whole scheme of Christian principles must be rejected, or hypocritically received, whilst in the same degree that we know ourselves, it will be reverenced, embraced, and practically improved by us.*

* For an Office suited to this Subject, see Prayer the *Ninth.*

SUNDAY VII. CHAPTER VII.

On the Perfection and Use of the Law.

WE have now endeavoured to delineate the character of God, and the natural state of man, as they are revealed in Scripture; the next subject, with which all men ought to be fully acquainted, is *the nature of the Law.* The law, with its terms of perfect righteousness and life on the one hand, of disobedience and death on the other, is the first thing which

the word of God presents to our notice; and till this is known, the Gospel cannot be understood, nor the grace of God be duly received: for the Gospel is the revelation of God's way of delivering a sinner from the curse of the law. The intimate connection which subsists between the law and the gospel is frequently taught in Scripture; yet from a natural reluctance to confess ourselves the guilty impotent creatures we are, and from a false construction of what is spoken of the law (as if it related only or chiefly to the Jewish state,) this connection is fatally overlooked by multitudes who profess themselves Christians.

To remove such hurtful ignorance, I shall lay before you the perfection and extent of the moral law; the excellent ends it perpetually answers wherever it is duly received, and the pernicious errors which must possess and govern the minds of men while they remain ignorant of it.

The perfection of the law of God will evidently appear by comparing it with other laws, and observing its greater extent. With regard to *human laws,* even the best of them must ever prove defective in this, that they cannot reach the propensities to evil, nor take cognizance of the intents of the heart: their whole force can extend no farther than to forbid acts which would disturb the public peace. The law of God, on the contrary, condemns under pain of insupportable penalties, the latent compliances of the heart with temptation, and commands us to resist the first workings of evil within.

If it is said *the law of conscience* is not defective in this respect, as the laws of the state must be; that this goes deeper, serving as a supplement to them, and

restraining where the power of a penal statute cannot. It may be replied, that the law of conscience is principally formed by the manners and sentiments of those with whom we are educated, and with whom we converse. Of course it is depraved by customs and prejudices of various kinds; it must prove therefore an uncertain, and sometimes perhaps a dangerous, instead of a sufficient, rule of action. But the law of Scripture leaves us in no such difficulties; while we are directed by it, we are following no other guide than that of perfect truth and righteousness.

The law which is established for the peace and good government of nations, is often severe and distressing to individuals, nor can it be otherwise; the best therefore is that which is accompanied with the fewest evils. But the law of God is equally, at all times, and in all places, of universal benefit: wherever it is most conscientiously regarded, there the greatest measure of happiness will certainly be enjoyed. For no one with truth can say, he is in the least degree aggrieved by it; nor can any, either of the rich or the poor, while they regard their true comfort or interest, have cause to wish the least alteration in it.

Again, the doctrine or law which the moral philosophers of old taught, and which many still profess greatly to admire, is little more than an imposture, disguised by swelling words of vanity. It undertakes to annihilate the passions, yet neither promises nor intimates that any supernatural aid shall be afforded to accomplish such an arduous work. Nay, it encourages instead of condemning some of the worst tempers natural to man. It cures intemperance and the thirst for revenge by pride, the sins of the body by giving in-

dulgence to those of the mind; that is, in other words, it makes a man less like a beast, by making him more like a devil.

Far different is the law of Scripture; this allows no place for sinful tempers of any kind; it strikes at the root of every disposition contrary to the perfection of the soul.

There is however one law which calls for a more respectful consideration; for it claims the God of heaven and earth for its author; I mean *the Jewish ceremonial law.* But even this, when compared with the moral, will appear far less excellent. For though of divine appointment, it was appropriated only to one people and nation: whereas the moral law extends to all, for it immediately results from the relation of mankind to God, as their Creator and Benefactor.

In the ceremonial law there was only a relative use and worth; it was to serve for a figure for the time then present; it was designed with no other view than to shadow forth Christ the substance, and then to cease for ever when he appeared. But the moral law possesses an excellence which endures for ever: and while the ordinances of the one, in a figurative symbolical manner, only respected inward purity, the precepts of the other are directly ordained to require righteousness in the tempers and imaginations of the heart.

The excellence and perfection of the moral law will appear still more manifest from a brief survey of what may be considered as an epitome of it, *the law of the Ten Commandments.* From their extent and spirituality it will appear indisputable, that its precepts are designed to secure to God all the honour due unto his name, to sanctify all the powers of man, to regulate

his deportment in every condition in which he can possibly be placed, and to point out the most exalted degree of holiness. For though we are apt injuriously to limit their sense, and to conclude with an air of confidence that they mean to forbid only the gross outward crimes which the first sound of the word suggests; yet from the more extensive interpretation given to some of them in Scripture,* we may justly conclude that each of them is spiritual in its injunctions, and reaches to the inmost affections of the soul.

Thus, the *First* Commandment requires that the blessed God should reign unrivalled in our hearts: that bodily pleasure, honour, riches, and every comfort of a worldly kind should in comparison of God, be vile and contemptible in our eyes. The *Second* obliges us to be religiously careful that we conceive of God as he has revealed himself to us, neither adding to, nor diminishing from his character, as drawn in his word; that in our public and secret worship we come before him only in the way which he has appointed; offering to him spiritual praise, thanksgiving, and prayer, and abhorring the very appearance of idolatry. The *Third* Commandment requires us to be mindful at all times of the majesty of God, so as conscientiously to avoid in our thoughts and speech whatever savours of contempt, irreverence, or forgetfulness of him. The *Fourth* enjoins us, upon constant solemn seasons, returning in quick succession, to lay aside every worldly occupation, to be as it were insensible to the things of sense and time; in order that the worth of the soul, and subjects of a spiritual nature may occupy our

* See Matt. v. 27, 28. 1 John iii. 15. Matt. xxii. 36.

thoughts, and more strongly affect our minds. The *Fifth* obliges us, as soon as we are capable of knowing our duty, to pay a sincere and cheerful obedience to our parents; such as may testify the sense we have of the benefits, that, under God, we owe to them. It enjoins also a respectful and proper behaviour to superiors of every kind, to the king, to magistrates, to ministers, and masters. The *Sixth* not only restrains our hands from murderous violence, but condemns every degree of hatred or malice in the heart. The *Seventh* Commandment requires more than the renunciation of open lewdness, even purity of desire: it arraigns and condemns as a trespass every impure look: it condemns even such spiritual defilement as only the eye of God can detect. The *Eighth* is a barrier against every injurious encroachment which our self-love and worldly spirit would lead us to make upon our neighbour's rights: it forbids every species of injustice or fraud, however prevalent, however palliated by plausible pretences. The *Ninth* exacts from us an inviolable regard to truth, in every declaration by which the character of our fellow-creatures may be affected; and enjoins us to subdue that world of iniquity the tongue, which is so impatient of yielding to the law of brotherly kindness and charity. The *last* Commandment condemns every covetous desire, and every degree of discontent at our appointed situation.

From this brief account of the sense of the Ten Commandments, it is evident, that there is not a moral precept enjoined in any part of the Bible, which was not virtually contained in the law of the Two Tables delivered on mount Sinai. Our Lord justifies this conclusion, by explaining in this manner the compre-

hensive import of the Commandments. Those of the first table he considers as requiring us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, Mark xii. 30. *with all our heart, and with all our soul,* that is, with a love so fervent and affectionate as to desire nothing in comparison of his favour, and the promotion of his glory; to regard him as the joy of our prosperity, the light of our life, and our portion for ever. *With all our strength,* that is, so as to promote the fear and love of his name by all our services and labours. *With all our mind,* that is, by all the means which our reason and understanding can furnish or discover. Thus are all our powers and faculties to be engaged in discharging our duty towards God, according to the demands of this spiritual law.

The laws of the second table also our Lord interprets to imply an obligation to love our neighbour *as we love ourselves,* that is, to pity his mistakes, to compassionate his infirmities, to conceal his faults, to exercise every office of kindness towards him, in the same manner as we should rejoice to have it exercised towards ourselves.

From this view of the extent of the law, it appears to be altogether worthy of its holy author the God of heaven and earth; who is at once jealous of the honour of his name amongst men, and full of tender regard to their welfare.

The *excellent ends which this law answers,* wherever it is received and duly regarded, is the next point to be considered.

Now one most obvious use is, that of a complete *standard of good and evil.* While man possessed the

original excellence he received from the hands of his Creator, a law written and engraved on tables of stone was needless. Before his fall, the graces of his soul were a living representation of the spirit of the law; and as face answereth to face in the glass, so did the unsullied mind of Adam to the will of God, of which the law is the perfect transcript. But man *shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin*, is darkened in his understanding, and nothing of that law of righteousness remains with him, which Adam in innocence possessed. Instead of innate knowledge of the truth, man must now, if left to himself, labour by slow and multiplied deductions to know his duty. So defective is his own unassisted reason in determining what is right and wrong, that things utterly detestable in our judgment, who have the pure light of the law, have been practised and approved in polite and civilized nations. A palpable proof this, that man has no light in himself sufficient to exhibit a clear rule of right.

To supply his want in this most important matter is one obvious design of the law, which God enacted from mount Sinai. This delivers man from his own fallacious reasonings about duty: this gives him to understand what are the peremptory commands of God, without leaving him in the perplexing labyrinth of his own imagination. This demands his attention to a short but most comprehensive rule of action: a rule which claims the God of heaven and earth for its adorable author, and of course equally excludes all doubt and all debate.

Another standing and perpetual use of the law, is by its *penalty to deter from rebelling against God* those whom more generous motives will not restrain. The

law represents the thunder-bolt of divine indignation as ready to fall every moment upon the offender against God: it brings upon him a dread of God as the judge *who will not hold him guiltless,* but on the contrary *will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children of them that hate him, to the third and fourth generation,* while he keeps *mercy for thousands in them that love him, and keep his commandments.* The inclinations of the heart, it is true, when only confined by external restraint, remain evil as before; yet the mischief that would follow, if they were indulged, is thus prevented. As men who do not abhor what is criminal, yet, through fear of punishment, dare not disturb the peace of society by acts of violence, so there are thousands kept from an excess in wickedness by a dread of the threatening annexed to the transgression of the law of God.

To serve as a standard of right and wrong, and to deter from offences, are uses which the law of God has in common with human laws. But besides these there are others which are peculiar to it: the Bible assures us the law was given *that every mouth might be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God,* Rom. iii. 19. It was given also, says the Apostle, to serve as a *schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth.* Gal. iii. 24. Rom x. 4.

Now that it is a principal design of the Law *to confound all who trust in themselves as righteous,* and to bring on them a conviction of guilt, is plain from the titles given to it in Scripture, and the reasonings of the Apostle concerning it. The law of the Ten Commandments is distinguished by the Apostle from the cere-

monial one, by styling it the law *written and engraven in* tables *of stone*. After this distinction is made, which clearly identifies the law of which the Apostle was treating, he gives it the title of *the ministration of* CONDEMNATION, 2 Cor. iii. 9. This title implies a law which, though it may perfectly lay before man the extent of his duty, yet it also inexorably condemns him. It allows no plea which he can offer to obtain an acquittal. The necessary result of its operation, when the natural state of man is considered, must be that of universal condemnation rather than acquittal, unless a Mediator be found to interpose and save.

But lest a single declaration of this most awful truth should be evaded or forgotten; or lest we should think slightly of that condemnation to which the law subjects every transgressor, it is therefore again called by that distressing name, *the ministration of* DEATH. This teaches us, that having arraigned and convicted man, it pronounces him condemned; exposed, without any power in himself to overcome or evade his sentence, to death. And lest it should be doubted whether by *death* is meant spiritual destruction, or merely the dissolution of the body, it is further styled, *the strength of sin*, 1 Cor. xv. 56. This intimates that the formidable power which binds over every unpardoned offender, to answer for his sins, and transmits him after judgment, to suffer the pains of hell, is the *Law*. In confirmation of this its grand design to prove our ruined condition without a Saviour, believers are exhorted to abound in thankfulness to God for giving them a *victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* over this law, which, through the corruption of human nature,

is become their dreadful accuser. Christ is therefore celebrated as an inestimable benefactor to his church, not merely because he gave us an example that we should follow his steps, not merely because he came to save those who trust in him from the temptations of a seducing world, or from the power of Satan; but because he hath *redeemed us from the curse of the* law, *being made a curse for us.* Gal. iii. 13.

Still farther, God has been pleased to use a wonderful method of explaining the important doctrines of his word, by exhibiting them in the history and experience of his servants. In this way of example he has taught us that the law of the Ten Commandments was given to convince man of his guilt and sinfulness. St. Paul is chosen, and by inspiration directed to relate his Pharisaical ignorance of the grand design of the law, and then to describe the change produced in his mind by a just and clear knowledge of it. *I was alive,* says he, *without the law once:* secure and self-satisfied, I regarded the moral law as the rule by which man was to be justified before God; and I thought that I had paid such an obedience to it as, considering human infirmity, must render me acceptable to God. *But when the commandment came,* that is, when the design of it was duly understood by me, *sin revived,* it became strong and irresistible in its accusations against me, *and I died;* my self-confidence vanished, and I saw and confessed myself to be a ruined sinner before the holy law of God. *And the commandment which was ordained to life,* which was originally designed to be to the first man a covenant of life, *I found to be unto death;* so far from justifying or acquitting me, it condemned and bound me over to the misery of hell.

Should it be said that the Apostle, in this passage, speaks not in his own but in an assumed character, we may observe that he expresses himself to the very same purpose in his Epistle to the Galatians:* when ardently speaking in his own proper person, *I*, says he, *through the law, am dead to the law:* Through the just knowledge I now have of the extent of its precepts, and of God's grand design by it, not to justify but to condemn every living soul, I have entirely renounced all dependence upon the law, as able to acquit me from guilt on account of any obedience I can pay to it: *I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God,* by faith in his Son.

And lest all this proof should not be sufficient to convince men, whose pride and self-conceit would dispose them to reject this humbling doctrine, and lead them to confine these declarations to the Jewish and ceremonial law; the Apostle takes particular care to assert such things of the law of which he was treating, as in *no sense* are, nor ever were, true of the ceremonial. Thus the law of which St. Paul speaks, is one *by which every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.* But the ceremonial law never was, nor can be urged to condemn us Gentiles, or to shew our guilt in any degree. The law of which the Apostle speaks, is a law established by faith, but faith absolutely abolished the Jewish law. It is a law to which the believing Romans were married; but many of them never submitted to the ceremonial one. It is a law, according to which *the man that doeth these*

* Gal. ii. 19.

things shall live by them. A law which, *if the uncircumcision keep, his uncircumcision shall be counted for circumcision.* It is a law which is *spiritual,* whereas the ceremonial consisted of carnal ordinances. These properties, which cannot be applied to the ceremonial law, evidently prove the law in the Apostle's view to have been the moral one, of which the Ten Commandments are a summary.

Now, after such various testimonies, what more can reasonably be demanded to prove, that one principal end for which the law is ordained, is to convince every man living of his guilt and sinfulness in the sight of God. * †

* When you consider the Law of the Ten Commandments in this light, what a striking propriety appears in that ancient custom of placing the Two Tables over the communion-table in our churches! By this means every intelligent receiver of the Lord's Supper, in the very act of receiving, is awfully reminded of the purity of that law which he has transgressed, of that law from whose insupportable curse no less a sacrifice than that of God's only begotten Son could possibly redeem him.

† See Prayer the *Tenth*.

SUNDAY VIII. CHAPTER VIII.

Of the Law as preparing for the Reception of the Gospel.

WE have already considered the perfection and extent of the Law: we have taken a view of it as a rule which determines our duty in all cases. We

have also produced several sacred testimonies, to prove, that it was designed to humble the pride of man, and to serve to him as a ministration of condemnation. But, connected with this, the law answers another important purpose—*It was given,* saith the Apostle, *to serve as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.* This use of the law is what I now propose to explain; but it will be useful previously to *remove the objections* which pride and prejudice are ready to bring against the law on account of what they term inexorable rigour.

You think it hard then that we should be under a law whose demands are so strict and rigid? But what less than perfect love and sinless obedience can be due from a reasonable intelligent creature to his adorable Maker? To suppose a law given of God, which would admit of imperfect love and obedience, would leave it impossible to determine what is sin, and what is not; *for sin is the transgression of the law.* But if the law itself would be satisfied with sincerity of intention only, or merely with the best kind of obedience which a corrupted creature could pay to it, how could any transgression of it be defined? Upon this supposition, it would be essential to the law to admit of imperfection and sin. Besides, were we to suppose that God could overlook *one* transgression of his law, we should naturally, and I think might justly conclude, that he would overlook more; and where then shall we stop? Who shall say how far we may, or may not go with impunity? And what must this prove in the end, but giving man liberty to fix the bounds according to his own will? What but putting man in possession of a right to dispense with the law

of God at pleasure, and thus in effect to abrogate it? It is therefore a design every way worthy infinite wisdom, to publish a law which is a perfect representation of God's glorious holiness; and to annex to every the least transgression of it, condemnation and the curse.

If you say, that such a representation of the law shuts up all men, without exception, in hopeless condemnation; I answer, It does indeed shew them that they have destroyed themselves, and it proves that they can find salvation only in the way the Gospel reveals; for there is no other way by which men can be saved. God must alike require obedience at all times; and it is one great design of all Scripture, and especially of the renewal of the law of Moses, to ground us in this truth, *that every act of disobedience* is a forfeiture of all claim to the favour of God, and subjects us to punishment. Where then else will you in this extremity look for safety? Will you say to God, *have patience with me, and I will pay thee all?* Will you, venture your soul upon the perfection of your own works? This you dare not. This you see is at once to give yourself up to destruction. Perhaps you will flee to your sincerity, taking it for granted that God, notwithstanding the confessed imperfections of your obedience, will accept it for its sincerity. But what Scripture warrant have you to say, that though God required a perfect obedience to his law at one time, and in one age of the world, he has now discharged men from that obligation, and will accept at their hands what they are able to offer him, be it ever so unworthy his acceptance, or short of the demands of his law? It is presumption to think thus, without espe-

cial ground from the word of God; and there you will certainly find none for this novel and mischievous opinion. Besides, what would you gain by this opinion, unless you could answer for your sincerity to that God, *whose eyes are as a flaming fire searching the heart?* For if you make sincerity the ground of your acceptance with God, you must stand or fall by it, and are obliged to make it good, without any failure or blemish, on pain of eternal condemnation. So that still you are upon no foundation for life, for solid peace and comfort.

It was therefore merciful in God to constitute his law a ministration of condemnation: it acts like an engine of irresistible force, to sweep away from us every refuge of lies, in which man would vainly seek a deceitful security; it compels us to renounce those false pleas for obtaining mercy, which, so soon as the light of truth shines upon our hearts, we shall be ashamed we could even so much as think of using.

Having thus endeavoured to remove the objections which might be urged against the law, as harsh and severe, I proceed to explain its principal design; a design replete with benevolence, and productive of the greatest good to man. *For the law is intended to act as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.* No sooner can we perceive ourselves actually cut off from every hope of mercy, which we were wont to entertain on account of our own performances and worth, than we shall find ourselves prepared, and as it were compelled, to put our whole trust in the grace of God manifested in Christ in that scheme of marvellous love to man, which is called *the righteousness of God without the*

law, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe, Rom. iii. 22. A true knowledge of the nature and end of the law sounds an alarm to the conscience, which was before asleep, dreaming of peace when there was no peace. Thus alarmed, the ear is open to listen to the word of reconciliation declared by Christ, and the heart is disposed earnestly to apply to the Redeemer, as to one who alone is able to save from such insupportable misery as the curse of the law.

It is the law also which, continually shewing us by the exhibition of its own purity, our deficiency and corruption, and approving itself to our consciences as just and good, stimulates us to earnest endeavours to resist and subdue the body of sin. Hence that internal conflict of which the Apostle speaks so feelingly, Rom. vii. 18. *I know,* says he, *that in me,* that is, in my flesh, *dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform* (as the law requires) *that which is good, I find not: for I delight in the law of God after the inner man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.* In other words, I perceive two contrary principles within me, the one derived from God, the other the produce of my corrupt nature; *that* leading me forward to heaven, and approving the spiritual demands of the law; *this* opposing my progress, and struggling against me. My mind is a field of battle, where all my passions exert their several efforts to gain a conquest over me. In this case what must be done? St. Paul instructs us by his own example; after asking the question with much emphasis, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* he relieves himself

from every despondent thought by saying, *I thank God,* that is, for his grace, *through Jesus Christ our Lord.* This, this alone it is, which can and will deliver me.

Into this pungent sensibility of our own sinfulness it is the intention of God by his law to bring us, that so we may be able, which otherwise we never should, to behold the necessity and glory of the redemption there is in Jesus. He has mercifully ordained the law, and annexed the curse to the least breach of it, that he might shut up every door of hope, except that by which the fullest pardon and the richest mercy are dispensed to sinners. The thunders and lightnings on mount Sinai are designed to make us account ourselves unspeakably happy in being allowed access to mount Sion, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the living God, where the divine goodness shines forth in the perfection of beauty.

That this is no human scheme of doctrine, but the truth of God's holy word, is manifest. *The Scripture,* says the Apostle, *has concluded all under sin, that the promise which is by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe,* Gal. iii. 22. The Apostle is here proving that the law, in the possession of which the Jews greatly boasted, was so far from lessening the necessity of salvation by Christ, or from interfering with this adorable scheme of grace, that, when rightly understood, it acted strongly in subserviency to it. For such is our natural pride and self-sufficiency, so slight our thoughts of the evil of sin, so extravagant our conceit of the extent of God's mercy, that if we did not perceive ourselves condemned by the mouth of the Lord, and doomed as criminals to suffer the exe-

cution of eternal justice, there is not one of us who would come to the Son of God for life. God has therefore by his law actually shut us up as rebels against his government, under a total inability of making reparation for our treason. This he has done, that our haughty spirit being humbled through a sense of our miserable condition, we might embrace with all possible thankfulness the grace offered to us in Christ.

Thus *the law,* or rule of perfect obedience, *came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ; for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,* that is, through the corruption of human nature, *God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.* A passage this, so pertinent to the subject, and so full of instruction, requires an explanation. Consider therefore the aim, and trace the progress of the Apostle's reasoning. He is clearing up and confirming that great privilege of the Gospel, that *there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, and who,* in consequence of their faith in him, *walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.* To this St. Paul knew some would be ready to object and say, How can this be, since every believer falls short of perfect obedience, he offends against the law, and therefore must be liable to its curse? The answer is, Believers are delivered from condemnation because of the *Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.* That new dispensation, introduced in the room of the old law, promises pardon, and the gift of the Spirit, in which things the true life and real happiness of mankind subsist. By this new and gracious dispensation, *God hath*

made me, saith the Apostle, *free from the law of sin and death;* from that law which convinced me of sin, condemned me for it, and bound me over to suffer death. These are glad tidings doubtless: but are they not attended with two inconveniencies? Does not this procedure deprive the law of its due honours, and does it not screen the offender from his deserved punishment? By no means; for that which was an absolute impossibility to men, on account of the strictness of the law and the weakness of human nature, *God,* to whom nothing is impossible, has most wonderfully accomplished, by *sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh,* to live among sinners, to perform the perfect obedience due from them, and also to be a sacrifice *for sin;* he having it charged upon him, and suffering its punishment. By this grand expedient God has provided for the honour and perfect accomplishment of the law. He has also *condemned* and punished *sin* with the utmost severity, and both *in the flesh,* in that very nature which was guilty, disabled, and ruined. Should it be further asked, wherefore is all this? It is to lay the surest foundation, and to make the most complete provision for our justification. It is, *that the righteousness of the law,* both its righteous sentence and its righteous precept, whatever either of suffering or obedience it required, being fulfilled in Christ, *might be fulfilled in us.* It was all done in our name; and as he and we are one, one in civil estimation, for he is our representative; and one in legal estimation, for he is our surety, his righteous acts in their beneficial efficacy are *ours,* and his atoning death is *ours: Ours, who walk not after the flesh,* who have our conversation towards God and man, not according

to the principles of corrupt nature, though to our grief they still have place within us, *but after the Spirit*, according to higher and divine principles, which are implanted in our hearts, and continually supported by the Spirit of God. Rom. viii. 2—4.

There is now placed before you in one view, the Scriptural account of the nature and design of the law. And unless pride, and the doctrines of men calculated to sooth this worst disease of our minds, mislead us, we shall be persuaded that this representation of strictness equally secures the honour of God and our own comfort in serving him. It is the purity of the law which enhances and endears above all expression, the perfect obedience of Christ, both active and passive, and the imputation of his merits, that special crowning mercy of the new covenant. Against this view of the nature of the law there is however a common and plausible objection made, which it may be necessary before I proceed farther, to obviate.—It is urged then, that by shewing the impossibility of answering the demands of the law, you in fact weaken our obligations to the law; and by extolling the obedience of Christ as the only ground of hope to man, you diminish the value of our obedience. Hence *a door is open for licentiousness.* Without doubt the doctrines of divine grace may be thus abused, and it is to be feared that many weak and corrupt men have so abused them; but it may be replied, what doctrine may not be perverted? Is not the display of the patience and mercy of God equally liable to licentious abuse as this doctrine? But will you on account of the general abuse of these perfections of God, be jealous of *them* as prejudicial to the cause of practical re-

ligion? or will you deny their existence because the avowal of them may have a bad tendency? The thought is dreadful, and the consequence would be universal destruction. It is the same with the doctrine of the law, when you infer from the impossibility of your being justified by your obedience to it, the necessity of being saved by faith in the Redeemer. Act then with respect to both in the same manner; maintain the doctrines, detest and expose the abuse of them.

But if you were to give up this Scripture idea of the law, still it remains to be considered whether you would gain any thing in favour of the interests of practical religion? No: you would only grant men the liberty of explaining the law according to their own inclinations, in a manner subversive of the fear and love of God, and regard to his authority. It must be remembered also, that when the Apostles assert the impossibility of justification by the law, they do not therefore make void the law; when they extol the grace and mercy of Christ, they by no means allow of continuance in sin. *Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? do we then make void the law by faith? yea, we establish the law.* This is their constant reply to all who arraign the doctrine of grace as licentious. Indeed it is the chosen, and by experience it is found to be the only successful mean of turning the heart to God in love. Its genuine operation is to bind us to him in everlasting bonds of gratitude and willing obedience. Know your guilt and weakness, your desert and danger; think what you are bound to by the law, and what you have to trust to if left under its power; view then the loving-kindness of God in giving his

Son to fulfil all righteousness, and then say, is it possible to sin against so much goodness? Granting there may be found such depravity in the heart of man, still you must allow that such a representation both of the justice and the mercy of God, if any thing can, will awaken a thought in you of returning to God, will bend your stubborn will, and make you hate iniquity.

It is highly unreasonable therefore to charge that doctrine with encouraging sin, which not only does not allow it, but which affords the strongest motives to cause us to abstain from it, and gives the highest ideas of its evil, and of the purity of the law which forbids it.*

* See Prayer the *Tenth*.

SUNDAY IX. CHAPTER IX.

The Evils arising from Ignorance of the Law.

IN the two former chapters we have explained the perfection and design of the Law; its perfection, as requiring unsullied obedience under the penalty of condemnation to eternal punishment; its design, as leading men to flee for safety to Christ, and to repose their hope upon his merits. Wherever this perfection and design are misunderstood, wherever a lower opinion of its purity is indulged, or a different view of its design is entertained, there, errors of the most dan-

gerous kind prevail, which it will be now my business to explain.

1. Ignorance of the law of God must leave you in a fatal mistake *respecting your real character before him.* You will imagine that you stand upon honourable terms with your Maker, and have continued from your birth a fit object for his favour, provided you have fallen into no infamous transgressions. You will not confess yourself a criminal, justly exposed to the wrath of God, merely because you come short in duty, or offend in many points of less moment. The knowledge that judgment is come upon all men to condemnation, is only derived from a just view of the law; therefore till you perceive that it requires sinless perfection, and on failure of this justly pronounces its curse upon you, you cannot acknowledge yourself to be a guilty ruined sinner in the sight of God.

More especially if you have had some early sense of your duty towards God, and have for conscience sake refrained from the sins common to your age and condition of life; in this case, ignorance of the law will leave you under a strong conceit of your own safe and happy state. Calls to repentance you will think belong to those only who have been enslaved by open vices, from which you have been always free; to those who have never led that apparently innocent life from their youth up, which you have done. Self-flattery will stir up in your heart resentment against all attempts to make you know yourself, and to bring you before God with true humiliation, and faith in his Son. Every thing of this kind will kindle your indignation, as a cruel design to wound your peace, and to make

you appear *far more wicked* in your own eyes than in truth you are.

So capital an error will tend also to frustrate the advantages of a good education, and to pervert even the blessing of God's restraining grace. It will lead you to lay a stress upon them they will not bear, and prevent your feeling the humility they were designed to convey. It will even make that virtuous character, which has gained you so much esteem amongst men, prove a greater obstacle in the way of your salvation than gross wickedness proves to others. Great sins carry with them their own condemnation: they have a tendency to excite, on the first lucid interval of consideration, strong confessions of guilt and fervent cries for mercy; whereas a behaviour externally regulated by the law of God, imperfectly understood, does but minister fuel to self-sufficiency and self-applause. Hence it is that we read of the Scribes and Pharisees justifying themselves: they were regular, they were decent, they were religious, but ignorant of the spirituality of the law. They could see no need either of their repentance, or of the grace of a Saviour. In the same false conceit of your own character you will continue whilst ignorant of the law; and either audaciously contradict what God has declared of the guilt of the human race, or equivocate about it till you have reduced it to an empty name.

On the contrary, when, to use the Apostle's emphatical term, *the commandment has slain you;* when you have considered and allowed the demands of the law, and its penalty upon the least defect, then, without disgust or hesitation, you will confess your guilt and

sinfulness; you will own that you are condemned by a law which claims Him for its author who only is able to save or to destroy. Whatever sins therefore you may have escaped, either by the influence of education or the restraints of grace, and whatever degree of just reputation you have gained amongst men, though you will be humbly thankful for them, yet still you will remember that these advantages alter not your state respecting God, though they have happily prevented the multiplication of your crimes. Though innocent of those flagrant iniquities which abound in the world, you will confess yourself a transgressor justly liable to eternal punishment, if dealt with according to your deserts.

Happy conviction of guilt! which performs the beneficent office the *Baptist* discharged of old, preparing the way of the Lord, and rendering his salvation inestimably precious to the soul!

2. Ignorance of the law *produces corrupt principles of obedience.* The blessed God has, by right of creation, an indefesible claim to our submission. This claim he has enforced by his own express command: He has added also the highest commendations of an obedient spirit, and promised to it an everlasting reward. But perverse construction is too generally put upon the encouragement he has thus given to holiness, where the law is not understood; and in consequence the very obedience paid to his commandments is paid upon false principles, such as render it odious in God's sight. Thus some regard the precepts which enjoin liberality to the needy, and are very large in their donations, hoping by this to atone for their lewdness and

sensuality; for they say, *Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy.* Others are conscientiously true to their word, and faithful to all their engagements, flattering themselves that such integrity will counterbalance their pride and profaneness, by saying, *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and a just weight is his delight.* Others, and if possible a worse sort, multiply exercises of devotion as a commutation for their injustice and insincerity, their malicious or covetous temper, confiding in the promises made to prayer and diligent attendance on the means of grace.

From such hateful motives do that morality and devotion, of which many are so conceited, often take their rise. Motives springing from an opinion which reduces the sinfulness of sin to a venial infirmity, which soothes our pride by exalting to an extravagant rate the value of our polluted services, and which even encourages disobedience, by supposing an offender against the law of God able to make compensation for his sin. Yet most offensive to God as this opinion is, nothing but the true knowledge of the law can effectually subvert it. The law, by pronouncing a curse on every thing short of sinless perfection, leaves no ground for any composition with sin. By rejecting with dreadful menaces all human attempts as far too poor to make satisfaction to its authority, whenever violated, it leaves no possibility of supposing that obedience in some instances can be of force to atone for the want of it in others. It compels the less atrocious sinner, as well as the great one, to confess himself insolvent, and to own that nothing can administer relief in his case which is not equal to the full demands of the law.

3. Though you may possibly be free from the gross but common error of fancying that some sins may be overlooked, lost as it were in the blaze of superior goodness, still, if you are ignorant of the nature of the law, you will be apt to entertain *an impious conceit of the merit of your good works.* Instead of maintaining the absolute necessity of practising and of abounding in them as the only visible vouchers that you believe in Jesus; as the infallible evidence of the truth of your repentance and conversion, in which light it is impossible too highly to extol their use, or enforce their practice; through ignorance of the law, you will suppose your own personal righteousness and that of the Redeemer to have the *same sort of weight* with God, to *act* in the *same* capacity, and have at least a *joint influence* in procuring your pardon and salvation. Many in fact who possess a sense of religion, do thus dangerously deceive themselves. They endeavour to do their duty, mortifying their lusts, and leading a devout life. On this account, though they are confessedly guilty in many points, yet their own goodness they are confident will considerably contribute to recommend them to God, and the merits of Christ they trust will make up what is wanting. Of consequence, so long as they fall into no gross sin, but continue regular, honest, and attentive to religious duties, they are satisfied that they have done their part, and that there is such a worth in their sincere though imperfect obedience, as will procure them acceptance with God, and eternal life.

This refined error necessarily results from ignorance of the law; and, unsuspected of evil, keeps firm pos-

session of the mind till the law is understood. Yet no error can abound more with self-contradiction, or with affront to God. With palpable *self-contradiction;* since this is supposing that at the very time you confess yourself under the guilt of sin for omissions and defects; at the very time you need a pardon as offending in many things, there can still be sufficient excellency about you to obtain favour with God. It is to suppose, that even whilst conscience accuses you, and the law condemns you as a sinner for disobedience, you still possess such a fund of righteousness as will have a considerable influence in making reconciliation for you. Strange contradiction! To confess yourself guilty and implore pardon, and yet at the same time to cherish a hope of being favourably regarded on your own account. Surely to implore pardon implies that you lie at the feet of mercy without any plea, but the compassion of God. Whereas to trust, as a coadjutor with Christ, in your own obedience, supposes a high degree of worth in yourself.

Besides, by holding this error your *affront to God* is as notorious as the contradiction in which it involves you. You make the glorious Redeemer undertake our ransom merely to render our deficient duties meritorious, and our sins inoffensive. You make his sinless life, his precious death, and mediatorial undertakings serve no other purpose than that of erecting a pedestal on which human worth may stand exalted, and be displayed in false colours. According to this scheme, the pardon of rebels against the Most High, and the reception of leprous sinners into the bosom of heaven, (effects, than which nothing can be greater, benefits, than which nothing can be richer,) are ow-

ing to the work of our own hands, and the virtues of our own character, in conjunction with Christ.

Now what greater affront can be offered to that divine goodness, which interposed to save us when we were lost, than thus to divide the honour of our acceptance between Christ and ourselves? What more daring opposition to God the Father, who has given Christ for salvation to the ends of the earth, than to trust in our own obedience, as having, partly at least, merit to procure it for ourselves? What more plain denial of the Scripture, which so expressly ascribes, and so entirely appropriates, the salvation of sinners, from first to last, to the praise of the glory of God's grace in Christ Jesus? Compare, for instance, this self-exalting doctrine with Isaiah's most sublime account of the combat and the conquest of the Redeemer, and then conclude how injurious it must be to his honour to regard your own works as coadjutors with him. The prophet, in surprise at the appearance of a most majestic personage, asks, *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?* that is, from the country and from the capital of the implacable enemies of the people of God. To which the Redeemer replies, *I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.* Upon this the prophet renews his inquiry, *Wherefore* (if thou art come not to destroy, but to save) *art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?* To this the Redeemer answers, *I have trodden the wine-press;* my foes I have crushed, I have trampled them under my feet: but they were thy enemies, sin, death, and Satan. *I have trodden the wine-press* by myself *alone;*

too great in my power to want an associate, and too jealous of my honour to accept of any assistant; *of the people there was none with me:* the salvation of sinners in all its parts is my act, even mine ONLY; yours be all the benefit, mine all the glory. Isaiah lxiii. 1—3.

The same doctrine is uniformly taught by all the inspired penmen. Yet so pleasing to the human heart is the thought of assuming something to ourselves in the grand affair of our salvation, that nothing but the right knowledge of the law can make the attempt appear in its proper degree of guilt. This indeed will, because it fixes with the greatest precision the value of good works, and the place of human obedience. The law will not suffer you, to consider the most conscientious mode of obedience in any other light, than as a testimony that you believe with godly sincerity the delightful truth, that Jesus purged away your sins by the sacrifice of himself; for which unspeakable benefit you love him, you keep his commandments, and you abhor those iniquities which made him suffer and die.

To think and live thus is *Christian* obedience; of quite another colour and complexion from that which springs from every other motive. This is *to use the law lawfully;* not as interfering with the Redeemer, or shading his glory by encouraging the expectations of life from obedience to its commands, but as a clear revelation of the infinite demerit of sin, and of the absolute need of the interposition of Christ, *who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

4. *Self-preference,* and a conceit of *personal perfection in the saints,* together with all their train of mis-

chievous consequences, are owing to ignorance of God's law.

The slightest observer of mankind may easily perceive that pride is naturally the ruling passion in every heart, and that we covet in all things to have the pre-eminence. Hence not only beauty of person, possession of wealth, reputation of learning, or the distinction of noble birth, but even our spiritual attainments, become strong temptations to the indulgence of pride. Thus of old we find a numerous party among the Jews rendered conspicuous by their religious zeal, who, elated by their fancied superior grace, cried out, *Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.* Isaiah lxv. 5. The same persons who thought so highly of themselves, judged it impossible for notorious sinners to be pardoned, and treated them with insufferable disdain. The like self-preferring spirit governs many at this day, who stand distinguished for their strictness and punctuality in religious offices. Now to purge out this Pharisaical leaven is the peculiar work and office of the law of God. It is not enough to tell those who highly esteem themselves for their religious excellencies, that they owe them to the free gift of God: this, with the Pharisee, they will allow, and yet value themselves on account of the gift. Neither is it sufficient to remind them of the blemishes which cleave to them, sully their best performances, and take away all pretence to self-esteem. For *these* they will place to the score of human infirmity and the imperfection of human obedience, still proudly dwelling in their own thoughts, on the manifest difference between themselves and others. But then you lay the

axe to the root of the tree, when you make such self-conceited professors of religion understand, that after all they have done or received, and notwithstanding the high thoughts they have of themselves, the curse of the law is upon all them *that continue not in all things written therein to do them:* that they are therefore not only imperfect, but lost, if dealt with as they deserve: that notwithstanding all their aspiring pretensions and glittering attainments, they can no more than the wicked, answer the demands made upon them by the law, but stand as liable as they to its condemnation, and remain equally destitute of any plea for their justification, but the mercy and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus no room is left for self-admiration; for whatever difference there may be between one sinner and another, respecting outward obedience or *degrees* of sanctification, the law will suffer no man living, to imagine he stands accepted with his Creator on account of his own obedience. But if every man who is in a state of salvation, be thus compelled by the law to acknowledge the blessing to be wholly of grace, then boasting and self-exaltation are utterly excluded.

The conceit of *personal perfection likewise in the saints*, is maintained only by ignorance of the law of God. For it is impossible that such polluted creatures as we are, should ever dream that after our highest attainments, there remains upon us no charge of sin, if we knew the full extent of the law, which condemns the least failure, and allows not the very least imperfection. In every instance, on every occasion, it charges us

> With act intense, and unremitted nerve,
> To hold a course unfaltering.

It commands us not only to serve the Lord, but to serve him with all our strength: not only to love our neighbour, but to love him as ourselves; and to demonstrate that we do this by every temper, by every word, by every desire, and by every thought. When you have your eye fixed upon the law, so spiritual in its demands and enjoining such perfection of obedience, you will most readily acquiesce in that humbling confession of the inspired Solomon, *There is not a just man upon earth that liveth and sinneth not.* You will use, from a deep conviction of your own sinfulness, that confession so expressive of true humility, and of the perfection of the law of God; *If thou, Lord shouldest mark iniquities, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

To conclude; you may learn from what has been now laid before you, that if you desire to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ upon principle and sound conviction, you must thoroughly acquaint yourself with the nature and design of the law of God. Like a faithful mirror, it will discover your poverty and sinfulness: it will make the mercy of God in Christ Jesus appear as great and glorious in your eyes, as it is declared to be in the Bible. Then you will live by faith in the Son of God, pleading his costly sacrifice and perfect righteousness with all humility at the throne of grace, as the only foundation of your hope towards God.

And as a prodigal son, who, through folly and sin, has brought himself into a state of disease and ruin, will, when duly affected by a sense of his condition, most thankfully acknowledge the kindness of a tender parent, who notwithstanding all his vileness receives

him with forgiveness and embraces him with love, so will you, deeply impressed by the sight of your sinfulness manifested by the law, intensely desire to serve that God who took pity upon you when utterly ruined, loved you when you possessed not one single feature of comeliness, and who loves you still in the midst of much prevailing unworthiness. Thus those two universal and mighty principles of disobedience, self-confidence and self-conceit, will be expelled; and a rational humility productive of universal holiness will be established. Daily convinced that if God were to enter into judgment with you, you must be found guilty and worthy of death; you will adore, love, and obey him who hath redeemed you from the curse of the law, purchased for you a crown of life, and called you to a throne of glory.*

* See Prayer the *Tenth.*

SUNDAY X. CHAPTER X.

Of the Nature and Extent of Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

IN almost every page of Scripture excellent things are spoken of the power of Faith; and whatever some may boast of their good works and meritorious virtues, the good effects of which in society may justly be extolled; still, so long as the authority of the Bible remains, it is a decided point, that to be with-

out faith in Christ is to be actually exposed to the wrath of God.

Every one therefore ought most carefully to search the Scripture, in order to inform himself of the essential properties of this fundamental grace. Thus will he be secured on the one hand from an enthusiastic idea of its nature, and on the other from a degradation of it into a barren and worthless notion.

The shortest and plainest method to determine its nature will be, I apprehend, to ascertain what *peculiar excellency was in those who were highly commended by the Lord Jesus for the greatness of their faith in him,* and what was *their fault* whom he rebuked for *unbelief.* When these two points are once determined, it is hoped the nature of faith will be so clearly laid open as to prevent erroneous opinions concerning it, and to deliver all serious readers from that perplexity which, amidst the various disputes about it, they find it difficult to avoid.

The first instructive example which I select in order to explain and determine the precise nature of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is that of *The Centurion,* mentioned Matt. vii. Warmed with an active benevolence, and sympathizing with an afflicted member of his family, he earnestly applied to the Redeemer, begging that he would have pity upon his servant, whom he had left grievously tormented with the palsy. The faith which inspired the Centurion's heart, and prevailed with him to make this request, though perfectly known to Jesus, was entirely unperceived by the surrounding multitude. They could not tell, whether he might not come glad, as one in a desperate case, to catch at any thing, which had the least appearance of a reme-

dy. Our Lord therefore replies to him in such a manner, as he knew would bring forth the most undeniable proof of his faith: he saith, *I will come and heal him.* But the amiable modesty of this great believer would not suffer him to think of the honour of receiving such a guest under his roof. He answers therefore, that it was wholly unnecessary for Jesus to trouble himself to come; *Speak the word only,* said he, *and my servant shall be healed;* adding, that he was no less assured of the power of Christ over all bodily diseases, both to remove and inflict them at his pleasure, than he was of his own authority to command his soldiers.

When Jesus heard it, he marvelled: he was struck with admiration at the infinitely grand and just idea which this Roman officer had conceived of his power, though he was in outward appearance the meanest of men.

To make therefore his faith eternally conspicuous, and at the same time most clearly to ascertain the essential nature of that grace which was to be the instrument of salvation to every member of his church, *Jesus said unto them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And I say unto you, Many shall come from the east and the west,* that is, possessed and governed by the same precious faith you now see exercised towards me; *and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*

Examine now what was the faith of this Centurion. It was evidently a firm persuasion of the almighty power and goodness of Christ, producing a dependence upon him, and an application to him for help

and deliverance in favour of his afflicted servant. By consequence, true faith in Jesus, is that knowledge of his character and office which inclines the heart to depend upon him for continual help in our spiritual need.

This is confirmed by another very remarkable instance, *that of the Canaanitish woman.** Hearing of the arrival of Jesus in the country near which she dwelt, she came unto him, saying, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil:—but he answered her not a word.* Nay, he seems absolutely to refuse her request, assigning as a reason, that his ministry must be confined to the Jews. And when entreated yet again, he adds a still more mortifying and discouraging reply, that it was not meet for him to display his mercy amongst the heathen, who, through their idolatry and other pollutions, were become, like dogs, impure before God; that this was to be confined by him to the church of God, his children by covenant and profession.

The woman acknowledges the justness of what our Lord urged: and she replied, *Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.* Let me only have such kindness as the dogs which belong to a family enjoy: amidst that abundance of miraculous cures which thou art bestowing on the Jews, bestow the fragments of this one upon me, who am a poor distressed heathen: for by these they will suffer no greater loss than the children of a family do by the crumbs which are cast to the dogs.

Then Jesus answered, *O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*

* Matt. xv. 22.

Here also every eye must perceive what was so illustrious in this woman; it was her persevering adherence to the Lord Jesus Christ for help and deliverance. In the midst of the greatest discouragements she remained patient, yet importunate, and resolutely depended for relief upon the grace which she was persuaded dwelt so richly in him.

From this instance then, no less clearly than from the former, Faith in Jesus is determined precisely to mean the reliance of the heart on him for help and deliverance.

The same truth is as strongly proved from the *fault plainly charged on those whom Jesus rebuked for their unbelief.*

In the eighth chapter of St. Luke, we are informed that our Lord, fatigued with his abundant labours of love, fell asleep as he was sailing with his disciples. In the mean time the weather suddenly changed, and a storm came on. The disciples exerted their utmost skill in the management of the vessel; but in vain. The waves breaking in, filled her, so that she began to sink; and they, giving themselves up for lost, ran to Jesus, shrieking out, *Master, Master, we perish.*

Their cries awoke him: He instantly rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a calm. Upon which he immediately turns with this reproof upon his disciples, *Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?* Mark iv. 38.

In this instance also, you perceive that it was want of reliance upon the power of their divine Master, even when destruction in all appearance was overwhelming them; it was doubting his ability to gather the stormy winds in his hand, and to prevent the rag-

ing floods from breaking in upon them; it was yielding to the fear of death when it seemed opening its jaws to devour them, which our Lord rebukes as a demonstration of their unbelief. And justly too, since after the many miracles they had seen him perform, they had abundant cause to rely on his power and goodness, even in a greater danger than this; for though their vessel had sunk, he who gave sight to the blind, could have saved them all by making them walk firmly on the water, as he afterwards enabled one of their number to do.

To avoid being tedious, only one instance more shall be produced.

In the ninth chapter of St. Mark, we have a remarkable relation of a father, greatly distressed on account of the disorder of his son, bringing him to the disciples. Finding them unable to heal him, and dispirited at the sight of his son's misery, together with the remembrance of its long continuance, he was afraid this possession might surpass even the power of Jesus himself. Expressing therefore his doubts and fears, he saith unto him, *If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.* Jesus said unto him, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth;* that is, to him who is immoveably persuaded of my all-sufficient power. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief;* in other words, "I "do now sincerely trust in thee as able to help me: I "am touched with grief and shame to think there "should be so much unbelief in my heart. O forgive "and remove it, that I and my son may be thoroughly

"cured; I of my spiritual, and he of his bodily di-
"sease."

Instances, without number, might be brought; but these alleged are fully sufficient to determine, what is the precise meaning of that divine grace, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ:—they prove that it means the affiance of the soul in Jesus Christ for help and deliverance.

If it should be said, that the Centurion and the Canaanitish woman shewed their faith, the disciples and the distressed father their unbelief, with respect only to *temporal evils;* therefore, that these are not proper examples to determine the nature of that faith to which the salvation of the soul is promised; the answer is obvious, That the difference in the nature of the benefits which are the objects of desire, by no means infers a difference in the principle of Faith. It was by one and the same kind of Faith, we are assured, that Noah built the ark, that Abraham offered his son, that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. These acts, though different from each other in their respective ends, proceeded from one and the self-same principle. In like manner, whether trust in the power and all-sufficiency of Jesus be exercised in seeking deliverance from temporal or spiritual evils, from wants, more in number or less, it is still the same divine grace relying upon the same glorious power.

Indeed, the extent of true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ does and must reach as far as our necessities; therefore a particular knowledge of our wants, and of the exercise of Faith with respect to the supply of

them, will afford the most ample view of the extent of this grace.

First, then, as soon as we compare our lives with the rule of our duty, the law of God, accusations of guilt cannot but pour on us from every side. Each of the Commandments, spiritually understood, according to the explanation given in the sermon on the mount, has sins of commission or omission to lay to our charge. God and our own consciences tell us, that our offences have been not merely errors of ignorance, but sins against light and knowledge; the effects of a proud rebellious spirit against the most high God.

Now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is, under the heart-felt conviction of such guilt, and in abhorrence of it, *to depend on his blood as the propitiation which God himself hath set forth for our sin.* It is to make use of this plea alone that the hand of insulted Justice may not seize, nor the arm of Omnipotence destroy our soul; "Jesus was wounded for those very "transgressions whereof my conscience is afraid; and "bruised for those very iniquities I am now bewailing "with a godly sorrow." In despair of ever receiving pardon through the merit of any thing we can do to help ourselves, or through the uncovenanted mercy of God, it is to place our whole confidence in Jesus, *as made a sin-offering for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* It is under a consciousness of daily sin, and of the infinite holiness of God; to esteem Christ as our passover; to be persuaded that the merit and virtue of his blood is our perfect and only safeguard from deserved wrath: just as the Israelites of old looked on

the blood sprinkled on their doors as their only safeguard from the destroying angel.

Further—Another great evil to which all men feel themselves subject, so soon as they come to any knowledge of their condition with respect to God, is that of a depraved understanding. They perceive that their apprehensions of the ever-blessed God and his law, of sin and their own demerit, are deplorably mistaken: they confess themselves children of darkness, in need of divine illumination to conquer their stubborn ignorance, and to remove their numberless prejudices against the truth of God; to dispel those mists which arise from inordinate affection, and that blindness to spiritual objects which prevents their effectual impression upon the mind.

Now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is, in the midst of these circumstances, *to make application to him, as one able to enlighten the understanding,* and to secure it from all the delusions of false reasonings and imaginary schemes of serving God. It is, to make request to Him for instruction, who through the tender mercy of God came to visit a world *sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death,* to the intent *that all who believe in him should not walk in darkness, but have the light of life abiding in them.* It is, with the meekness of a child, simply to believe what we are told by him, without murmuring or disputing. It is, as absolutely to depend day by day on the teaching of Christ, through his word and Spirit, for the knowledge of all things needful to salvation; as a submissive pupil depends upon the instructions of a master whose abilities and learning are universally confessed and admired.

Again—When you desire and earnestly endeavour to

live in obedience to the spiritual commandments of God, without which a course of sobriety and external religion is vain; you will immediately feel your own weakness, just as Samson experienced the loss of his strength, when he was rising, after his locks were shorn, to combat the Philistines—you will find your nature violently inclined to evil, and the desires of your heart to be fixed upon vanity and sin—you will see yourself surrounded with a thousand temptations to draw you from God, and to discourage you from living in conscientious obedience to him.

In these circumstances you will soon feel that it is a work far surpassing human power to alter the course of nature; to bring back those affections to God, which have been always alienated from him; or to reduce a will that has long been lawless, to subjection to the controul of God in all things. You will feel little ability, after having walked in the path of self-will as the only path of happiness, to forsake it, and to tread the rough and thorny one of self-denial. Yet such an inward change true holiness requires; every thing short of it is superficial, leaving the soul unprepared for the temper and happiness of heaven.

In these circumstances, to believe in Jesus Christ is *to depend upon him, as given by God to purify men for himself,* and to purge them, as a refiner's fire does the silver from its dross. It is, to be looking to him with confidence for the gradual performance of a work in your soul, no less necessary for your salvation than that already completed for you on the cross. It is, daily to make application to him, as one on whom God hath laid all your help, and whom he hath given

to save his people from their sins. It is, to bring before him, those vile affections which are natural to your heart; assured, that though your own resolutions and efforts have been frustrated from time to time, and wrought in you no cure, yet the power of the Lord will work mightily with you, and at length give you strength and victory.

Thus far the extent of true Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has been considered as reaching to a dependence on his grace and power for *present deliverance* from that darkness, guilt, and reigning sin, in which the whole posterity of Adam is involved.

But as our continuance on earth is exceedingly short; as this life must soon be lost in one which knows no end, where either the dismal effects of unpardoned sin must be eternally endured, or the exquisite joy of God's love delight the heart: so the *extent of Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ must be enlarged, to have relation to that eternity which is so near and important.* To believe in Christ therefore comprehends a firm confidence that you shall abundantly experience both his power and love, when every human help and comfort fail, and present objects are no more. Faith rests assured on his word, that the soul shall not wander desolate and forsaken in the unknown world, nor the dead body remain a prisoner for ever in the loathsome grave; but that the one shall be raised by him, and fashioned according to his own glorious body; and the other be admitted into that blessed kingdom where he employs his infinite wisdom and almighty power for the happiness of his people. In habitual expectation of mortality, it commends the spirit into his hands, knowing he is able to keep what is commit-

ted to him unto that day; persuaded that he is the life and the forerunner of his people gone before to prepare a place for them, from whence he will come and receive them unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also.

This definition of Faith in Christ, that it is an abiding heart-felt trust upon him for help and deliverance; a trust that he will save you from ignorance by revealing his light; and from guilt by imparting the merit of his blood and righteousness; that out of weakness he will make you strong by his power, and enrich you through all eternity with his love: this definition, I say, has this advantage, that it *is plain and intelligible to every capacity*. Men of learning frequently condemn the laying great stress on the doctrine of salvation by Faith alone as perplexing, and liable to be misunderstood by common understandings. After all that we can say about it, they tell us, the common people will be still at a loss to conceive what Faith in Christ means. Could this objection be made good, it would overturn the whole credit of the Gospel, for *that* perpetually inculcates Faith as the root of all the fruits of righteousness. And indeed it is certain, that whatever is of great moment to salvation, must be plain and easy to the comprehension of all, who will be at the pains of seeking for the knowledge of it. But in fact, there is no place for this objection, when Faith is represented to be a dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Are not the poorest among the people to the full as well acquainted as the rich and learned, with the nature of promises and the confidence due

to them, when made by persons of power and integrity? Is any one, of a common capacity, at a loss to conceive, that the ignorant who would learn, must depend upon their teacher? Or that those whose debts are increased above what they are able to pay, must be cast into prison, or stand beholden to some surety, or some act of grace, or both? What difficulty can there be in understanding that those whose enemies are mighty and tyrannical, and not to be resisted by their own strength, must look for defence and refuge to one mightier than they? Now only transfer these most plain and familiar ideas to the divine Redeemer, and you have at once a full and distinct notion of what it is to believe in his name: it is what the lowest are not only capable of understanding, but what they can all feel. For when we explain the nature of Faith, we make our appeal to those very feelings which are the most forcible of any implanted in the human breast—to the fear of danger, to the hope of deliverance, to confidence of help, to gratitude for benefits unspeakably great. *

* See Prayer the *Eleventh*.

SUNDAY XI. CHAPTER XI.

The Advantages of a just Conception of the Nature of Faith.

IN the preceding chapter we endeavoured to give a distinct and clear idea of the nature of Faith, as it is determined by examples from Scripture; in which

the want of it was censured, or its excellence commended. We stated it to be a stedfast and active trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.—Now, as many and great advantages flow from a just conception of the nature of so important a grace as Faith, while on the other hand the most serious evils may arise from an imperfect or false idea of it, I purpose in this chapter to point out the advantages which evidently result from admitting the definition of it already given.

1. It evidently excludes those *abuses*, which a false idea of the nature of Faith has in many cases produced.

That many and grievous abuses of Faith should abound, is not strange; since the incomparable blessings promised to it, operate like so many bribes upon our natural self-love, to make us deal dishonestly, and in the absence of the reality to embrace a counterfeit.

Thus, for instance, it is most common for *speculative Faith* to pass for genuine Faith. When a learned reasoner has compared the glorious prophecies concerning Jesus with their events, and seen the wonderfully exact accomplishment; when he has canvassed his doctrine and miracles, till his understanding is furnished with arguments enough to silence all who doubt or disbelieve the truth of the Gospel, he is inclined to become confident that he is a true believer, and that his Faith as a Christian is perfect and entire, lacking nothing: he is confident of this very thing; while his ruling tempers utterly disgrace his Faith, and give the witnesses of his example abundant cause to think most contemptuously of a principle thus perversely abused.

To convince a man of this character, that he most shamefully imposes upon himself in calling his knowledge by the name of Faith, will I grant, be very difficult. But if any mean can do it, it must be the proof that his acquaintance with the doctrines of Jesus, his ready assent to their truth, his alacrity in their defence, still leave him only upon a level with those who openly reject the Gospel; that is, they leave him equally a stranger to any active dependence on Jesus Christ for help and deliverance; that he, no more than an absolute infidel, looks up day by day as a poor, ignorant, sinful, helpless creature, for the relief of his necessities, to the all-sufficient Saviour. Consequently, this speculative, self-satisfied believer may perceive, that such a Faith in the Son of God as the Scripture requires, and which only will be of benefit to his soul, is a principle entirely of another kind from that assent he has given to the truths of the Gospel.

In the very same way of trial, another detestable abuse of the doctrine of Faith, to which the love of sin inclines us, will be fully discovered. No sooner was the Gospel way of salvation preached to the Gentile world, and the name of Jesus glorified, than Satan, jealous of his own empire, prevailed over a large body of professing Christians to boast they had Faith in Christ, and were complete in him, while they were living in sin, hardened against all renovation of mind, in contempt of personal obedience, and resolutely neglecting the means of grace. They confidently declared that they knew him; they gloried in the imagination, that Christ's righteousness was their holiness, while they refused to follow his example, and trampled upon his commandments. In every revival of re-

ligion, the same error has revived also; and what is said of envy with respect to merit,

> Envy, the shadow, proves the substance true,

holds good in this case. Wherever the true Gospel is enforced, this dreadful abuse of it will more or less make its appearance.*

But this delusion, which has justly obtained the name of *Antinomian Faith,* from its enmity to the controul of God's most holy law, can find no reception where Faith is understood to be a constant lively dependence on the Redeemer for present help and deliverance; because nothing can be more opposite to this dependence than the blasphemous opinion that you are not to receive from him the graces of the Holy Spirit. Nothing can be more contrary to the exercise of Faith in him, than the corrupt imagination, that you need not rely upon his power to conquer your corruptions, and to bless you by turning you from your iniquities. Nothing can more effectually destroy all communication betwixt the Redeemer and our souls, than so to interpret the efficacy of his divine obedience and most precious blood, as if no purification of the soul were wanted. This licentious no-

* St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, saw with their own eyes this abominable perversion of the truth; and take much pains in all their Epistles to guard against its poison. In Germany, and in England, as soon as the glorious Reformation dawned, this strong delusion of an Antinomian Faith began to prevail. It is therefore so far from being any just objection against the preaching of Faith, to urge that it is abused to licentiousness, that it proves on the contrary that the doctrines of salvation are apostolically set forth: and therefore Satan has recourse to his ancient device of supporting his own kingdom by endeavouring to bring this doctrine into reproach.

tion, in its very nature, absolutely excludes any present application to the Redeemer, and consequently any present dependence, to receive from him wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. However vehemently it may be maintained by many to be the purest Faith, it certainly has not one single property of scriptural Faith in Christ.

Again—By adhering to this definition of Faith, deduced from Scripture examples, that it is the lively and active trust of the soul in Jesus Christ, to receive from him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, you will be secure from confounding with true Faith *opinions imbibed only from education.* Most men, engrossed by earthly pursuits, and feeling nothing of the importance of the objects of Faith, take for granted the truth of the national religion, be it what it may, and regularly conform to its institutions. After having done so for a course of years they still more rashly also take for granted, that nothing less than true Faith could have kept them so long constant and regular in public worship without ever doubting the truth; while in fact, secure carelessness, love of money, or immoderate application to business, have prevented their considering religion as a subject worth their attention.

Now if you interrogate such deluded but confident formalists, Whether they were ever painfully convinced of their own natural ignorance and blindness, or of the depravity of their hearts? Whether they ever with grief of soul confessed the provocation of their sins, and the power of inbred lusts, and in the affecting view of both, have made application to Jesus for relief, and remain in dependence on him for the same?

These scrutinizing personal applications will at once discover the refuge of lies, and prove that what they imagine to be Faith in Jesus, is nothing better than vain and misplaced confidence.

Nay, farther, if you ask these formalists, who assume the name of believers in Christ; Upon what do you ground your hope of salvation? Their answer is, That they have used their best endeavours to lead a good life; that God is merciful, and knows their frailty. A foundation of hope this, very different from what the prophets and apostles have laid—for they, instead of teaching men to expect forgiveness merely because God is *merciful,* and because we endeavour to lead a good life, proclaim the death and sacrifice of the only Son of God to be the sole means of reconciliation. So far from flattering us that our unassisted endeavours will succeed in the great work of living a Christian life, they command us to be continually *seeking the Lord and his strength,* for this very purpose. Judge, therefore, how entirely *the Faith of the formalist* differs from true Faith; since it leaves a man in gross darkness concerning the way in which sin is to be pardoned, and power over it obtained.

There is still another mistake concerning the nature of Faith, which this plain and easy definition effectually discovers. Many men of the best intentions, and animated with earnest desires for the glory of God and the good of souls, have represented Faith in Christ *to be a particular revelation,* separately and supernaturally imparted to every individual believer the moment he truly believes; whereby his soul is enlightened, and the forgiveness of his sins made self-evident by the force of inward feeling alone.

Now that the blessed God can impress on the mind so strong a sense of pardon as to leave a repenting sinner, beyond all doubt, satisfied of its coming from him, none can question. And that in many instances, God is most graciously pleased in this manner to manifest himself and his love, none can dispute, who have been happily acquainted either with the lives or deaths of the excellent of the earth. By this manifestation, have martyrs been enabled to sing in the midst of the flames; and not only to endure all that is most dismaying to nature, but to triumph over it. By this manifestation of divine love, thousands are emboldened to continue faithful to God and their duty, amidst the scoffs and insults of the careless and profane.

Nevertheless, it is one thing to feel joy and exaltation,—another to be conscious you are depending upon Jesus Christ the Lord for the supply of all your wants:—one thing to build your evidence of pardon on a transporting sensation; quite another to infer it from your dependence on him, who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to all that believe in his name. And to suppose the reality of Faith in him can be evidenced no other way than by feeling an inward testimony of the pardoning love of God, is just as gross a mistake as it would be to suppose that credit is to be given to the written promise of an affectionate friend, no longer than he himself enforces it by personal declarations of his regard. To act thus, in every other case would argue violent suspicion of the veracity of him who gives the promise; how then with reason can it be made the only test of Faith in Christ, that you should

have irresistible evidence of his love in your own heart, superadded to the declarations of his Gospel.

It is needful in treating on the subject of Faith in Jesus Christ, to guard against this mistake of its nature, because, wherever the power of religion prevails, many are apt to place their dependence, on the knowledge of the forgiveness of their sins, by an inward feeling. They make it their whole business to seek for the evidence of their pardon from doubtful sensations, rather than from the written word. They speak as if nothing were worth acknowledging as a blessing from God, while they possess not such an evidence of pardon in their own hearts. Others also, with grief it must be acknowledged, have so imposed upon themselves, as to mistake a transient emotion of joy for real Faith, while they are strangers to any true humiliation for sin, or abhorrence of it in the heart. In the mean time, a third class, through the same mistake, have been overwhelmed with terrors, and led to pass sentence on themselves as destitute of Faith, and without Christ in the world, at the very time when they were seeking his help and grace as all their salvation; and consequently were true and sincere believers.

Another great advantage arising from the definition of saving Faith here delivered, as implying a lively dependence on Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, is, that it *establishes the true believer in solid peace and comfort;* and this is a strong evidence that it is scripturally defined. For the Gospel, like a remedy, adapted with astonishing exactness to our frame and condition, is intended to counterbalance all the allurements of temptation. It

bestows, even in this world, more than an equivalent for what any man can suffer or lose through obedience to God, as well as eternal life in the world to come. It assures every faithful disciple, that reconciliation is made for his iniquity; that he is an object of God's daily care, and an heir of his infinitely glorious kingdom. But the assurance which any particular person possesses that these blessings must appertain to him, must depend upon his certainty that he has true Faith. If this point is brought into doubt, his peace departs, his comfort dies away: for all the promises of God's acceptance and special love belong to them, and to them only who are united to Christ Jesus by a living Faith. It is no doubt with any one, whether a true believer is accepted of God; but the doubt so cruelly perplexing to serious minds, and so chilling to their hopes, is, whether they are believers or no.

In order therefore to secure to every believer that peace and comfort, which he has a sure hope from the word of God to enjoy, the evidence which proves the reality and truth of his Faith must be both clear and permanent. Of this perfect kind is the evidence which accompanies a lively dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ, to supply all our spiritual wants and necessities. This dependence is so easy to be known, that no one can possess it without being conscious of it. For it necessarily implies an intimate and most interesting connection between Christ and the soul, a knowledge of him affecting the heart, and an application to him, daily and persevering. A man therefore who is living in such dependence upon the Son of God, might as reasonably call in question the reality of transactions passing between himself and his friends on earth, as of

his Faith in Jesus. This evidence is also permanent. The sensible comforts of a Christian, it is true, are in their nature fluctuating, but his dependence does not vary as his consolations do. He does not return to the love and practice of sin, after fleeing in deep humility to Jesus as a Redeemer from its curse and power; nor revolt to a self-righteous trust on his own duties and merits, after having made a cordial submission to Christ as the Lord his righteousness. Hence, he that is oppressed with gloom, and tormented with fear, lest he should have no part in Christ, merely because he feels no transporting hope in his heart, may be able, when his judgment is better instructed in the nature of Faith, to prove himself a believer, by proving his whole dependence to be upon Christ. And in consequence of this proof, the joy, whose absence he was mourning, will spring up and flourish, and, like a fragrant flower, in its native soil, yield a reviving influence to his heart. He will be able thus to express the highest and the purest satisfaction, saying, *In the Lord's word will I rejoice, in the Lord's word will I comfort me!*

Besides: dependence upon Jesus for present help and deliverance will prove, *from its success*, an abiding source of comfort and assurance to the mind. Every sinner exercises trust in the Redeemer from a sense of misery and necessity. He would not cast himself a poor supplicant at his feet, could he be safe without his protection, or satisfied without his peace. But, upon application, the promise of God engages, that the things asked for shall be received. Accordingly, do you depend upon Jesus as your prophet? Behold wisdom from above will begin to enlighten your

mind, and an understanding in the way of life will soon be in some measure conferred upon you. Soon the world, sin, and your own heart are discovered to you in a light in which you never saw them before. Already God in his perfections, his works, and Gospel, is apprehended by you in a different manner from what he was wont to be. The gross ignorance that was in you, is now no more: hence you have the witness in yourself, that your dependence on Christ is no fruitless misplaced dependence. In like manner, when you were first awakened to a sense of your sin, your conscience was full of fears and alarms, and you had no comfortable communion with God: but, now, through a dependence upon the efficacy and merit of his blood, you are set free from condemnation, and have access to God with boldness. In the same way, the strength and power you receive to deny yourself for Jesus' sake, and the change of a headstrong lawless will into meek subjection, which is another effect of dependence on Jesus Christ; proves with the force of demonstration, that your Faith is neither formal nor delusive; and, by consequence, that you have an interest in all that belongs to the faithful.

Lastly, it must be added; that an active trust and dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ for help and deliverance, such as our definition of Faith supposes, *ascribes to him* such *importance and glory in our salvation,* as the Scriptures expressly declare shall be ascribed to him. This will appear evident, from the consideration of a few remarkable passages, both in the Old and New Testament, concerning Christ.

In the seventy-second Psalm, it is foretold of the Redeemer, that, *Prayer shall be made to him continual-*

ly, and daily shall he be praised. This glorious prediction receives a full and complete accomplishment by the continual dependence of all the faithful on Jesus Christ, for the supplies of wisdom, righteousness, and strength, and by their continued thankfulness to him for the gift of such inestimable benefits.

The evangelical prophet Isaiah abounds with emphatical declarations of the perpetual affiance of believers in Christ Jesus. The conversion of the Gentile world to him is expressed in this manner, *The isles shall wait upon me, and upon mine arm shall they trust.* By the same inspired penman, the Redeemer, with a grandeur and richness of mercy becoming his infinite majesty, thus addresses a sinful world:

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God; and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and in him *shall* they *glory.* Isaiah xlv. 22—25.

"Here the Son of God represents himself in all the "glory of his divine person, and all the efficacy of his "grace, as the object of Faith, and the author of sal- "vation. Look unto me, saith he, wretched ruined "transgressors, as the wounded Israelites looked unto "the brazen serpent; look unto me, dying on the "cross as your victim, and obeying the law as your "surety. Not by your own strength or virtue, but by

" dependence on me be ye saved, cleansed from guilt, " rescued from the power of sinful tempers, and re- " conciled to God.

" Do you ask, Who are invited to partake of this " inestimable benefit? *All the ends of the earth.* Peo- " ple of every nation under heaven, of every station in " life, of every condition, and of every character, not " excepting the chief of sinners.

" Do you say, Is it possible that in this way, so short, " so simple, merely by dependence on Jesus Christ, " innumerable millions should be saved? It is not " only possible, but certain: for *I am God;* infinite " in dignity and power, therefore all-sufficient, yea " omnipotent to save, to save all that come unto me, " be their multitude ever so great, or their cases ever " so desperate. *And besides me there is none other;* no " person can take my share in this great transaction. " Such is my compassionate invitation. And this my " inviolable decree; *I have not only spoken, but I have* " *sworn by myself,* and all my incomprehensible attri- " butes: *the word is gone out of my mouth in righteous-* " *ness;* that word which relates to the grandest of all " subjects, and the most important of all interests, is " planned, adjusted, and unalterably determined: *it* " *shall not return;* neither be repealed by me, nor " frustrated by any other. *To me every knee shall bow;* " every soul of man that desires to inherit eternal life, " shall submit to, and depend upon me; as an un- " worthy creature, as an obnoxious criminal; he shall " obtain the blessing wholly through my atonement. " *To me every tongue shall swear;* renouncing every " other trust, they shall repose the confidence of their " souls on me alone, and make public confession of

'this their Faith before the whole world: and this 'shall be the form of their oath, and the tenour of 'their heart-felt confession; each member of my 'church shall say, *Surely,* it is a most wonderful, yet 'a most faithful saying, extremely comfortable and 'equally certain; *Surely in the Lord,* the incarnate Je-'hovah alone, *have I righteousness,* to expiate all my 'iniquities, and satisfy the law; *and strength,* for an 'increasing improvement of heart, and sanctification 'of soul.

"To this sovereign decree the prophet set to as it 'were his seal; or else in a transport of joy he fore-'tels the accomplishment of it: Yes, *to him,* even to 'this great and gracious Redeemer, *shall men come.* 'I see them flying as clouds for multitude, and as 'doves for spread. They believe the report of his 'Gospel, and receive of his fulness. While all they 'that are incensed at him, who cannot away with such 'absolute dependence upon him, nor bear his pure 'and holy government, shall be ashamed. The fig-'leaves of their own virtues and their own endow-'ments shall neither adorn them for glory, nor screen 'them from wrath; but shall abandon them to ven-'geance, and cover them with double confusion. 'While on the other hand, all the seed of Israel, eve-'ry true believer shall be justified in the Lord. 'Against these persons no accusation shall be valid, 'no condemnation pronounced. Far from it; for so 'magnificent is the majesty, so surprisingly efficacious 'are the merits of the Saviour, that in him they shall 'not only confide, but glory; not only be safe, but

"triumphant; able to challenge every adversary, and "to defy every danger." *

Whether this text be considered with or without this comment, it plainly proves, that Jesus Christ is to be acknowledged as the only author of our salvation: it clearly marks the nature of true Faith to be a lively dependence on Christ, to receive out of his fulness grace for grace. It shews, that to conceive any thing to be Faith short of such absolute and constant dependence on Jesus, is to degrade the importance of the Son of God to his church, and to obscure, if not abolish, his glory. To suppose that you have Faith merely because you allow Jesus to have been no impostor in what he taught, or even because you grant his death to have been an atonement for sin, is to glorify him very little, in comparison of maintaining an uninterrupted dependence upon him. In the one case he appears as a common benefactor, to whose past generous deeds we have been much indebted; in the other, as our continual support, of whom we may triumphantly say, *The Lord is my light and my life, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?*

In placing him in this glorious point of view before the eyes of our mind, the New Testament perfectly concurs with the Old. Thus St. Paul and St. Peter represent the Faith of the Christian church to be such an intimate dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ,

* For this explanation of the sacred text, the Reader is indebted to a manuscript of the late pious and exemplary Mr. HERVEY. Since the first edition of this work, it has been inserted by Mr. HERVEY in one of his printed Letters to the Rev. JOHN WESLEY.

as subsists between the foundation of a lofty temple and its several parts, which continually bear their whole weight upon it. Ephes. ii. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.— They again explain this dependence by the union of the members of the body with the head. Ephes. iv. 15, 16. while Jesus himself compares it to the union of the branches with the vine. But none of these scriptural representations can be supposed to be used even with the justness and accuracy common to human writers, unless by Faith in the only-begotten Son of God, be meant an abiding heart-felt dependence on him for daily salvation, influences, and blessings.

It would be superfluous to add more Scripture evidence on this head; but it is of the highest importance *that you examine yourself*, where the stress of your dependence for the good of your soul is placed. To what source are you looking for pardon and strength, comfort and sanctification? To your own good purposes and endeavours, to your own prayers, meditations, and good qualities; or through them all, to that inexhaustible treasury which God has provided for poor, helpless, guilty men, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ? Blessed is your condition if you have this testimony in your conscience; that acknowledging your own natural ignorance and blindness, you call upon the name of the Lord Jesus to enlighten your mind, to make his way plain before you, and to give you a strong and distinct perception of the great things concerning your eternal peace. Blessed is your condition, if feeling your utter incapacity to procure the favour of God by the best of your duties, reformations, or performances, and confounded by a practical

conviction of your own demerit, you build all your hope of acceptance with God upon what Christ has done and suffered for you. Blessed is your condition, if, afflicted by the exceeding vileness of your corrupt affections, and longing for victory over them, for a more spiritual mind, and for a farther progress in love, both to God and man, you depend upon the renewing, sanctifying grace of Christ, to produce this divine change within you. *This* is to believe in the only begotten Son of God without partiality and without hypocrisy. *This* the word of God pronounces to be that dependence on Christ which shall never be confounded! May the Giver of every good and perfect gift create in your soul this unfeigned Faith, if you have it not already; and if you have, may he confirm and increase it still more abundantly.*

* See Prayer the *Eleventh*.

SUNDAY XII. CHAPTER XII.

On the Foundation of Dependence on Christ for Pardon.

THE same gracious and holy God, who planned the method of recovering lost sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ, has not only required, by his express command, Faith in Him, but, from the first entrance of sin into the world, he has been manifesting to the world, in various ways and in the fullest

manner, the character and glory of the Redeemer, and the safety of all who depend upon him in sincerity and truth.

This testimony, which God has given of his only begotten Son, is the solid, rational, and immoveable foundation of Christian Faith; and so amply does it display the completeness of his salvation, that, as I purpose to prove, there is no part of our dreadful disease and misery as sinners, for which there is not a sufficient remedy in the perfections he possesses, and in the offices he sustains for the salvation of his church.

To illustrate this; every man, it has been shewn above, is chargeable with the guilt of sin against his Creator, and of course stands exposed to the curse of God's violated law, and to the pains of eternal punishment. Let us see, then, what properties there are in the Lord Jesus Christ, sufficient to render him, in this case, the object of our affiance: *What sufficient warrant to justify our firm dependence upon him, as the propitiation for our sins,* in the sight of a holy sin-avenging God.

The answer which the divine record returns to this momentous inquiry, is sufficient to dispel every doubt, and to impart strong consolation to the most guilty soul that earnestly seeks for acceptance with its Maker. For it expressly declares, *that this Jesus,* on whom you are to depend, *is one in nature and essence with God;* that his *goings forth* (that is, his existence) *have been from of old, from everlasting.* Micah v. 2. That to his almighty power, the earth owes all its prolific virtue, and the variety of fruits which it produces

for the service of men; that from the worm which crawls unnoticed by us on the surface of the ground, to the brightest angel before the throne of glory, the Redeemer formed them what they are, and still preserves them in their being: for, *In the beginning the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* John i. 1, 3.—*For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* Col. i. 16, 17.—On account of this original and eternal glory, when the Redeemer is brought into the world, to be a sacrifice for sin, though he was no more in appearance than a weeping babe; though born like the child of some vagabond, in a stable, and laid in a manger; even at this moment the Father saith, *Let all the angels of God worship him.** For though abased in this mysterious manner, still he is the Creator and God of angels; he is *God manifest in the flesh.* 1 Tim. iii. 16. *Immanuel, that is, God with us,* is his name whereby he shall be called.

Here then, in this character, delineated not by the erring pencil of man, but by the Spirit of truth in the oracles of God; here behold the proper object of every repenting sinner's dependence. See with what just reason you may confide in him, who possesses all the attributes and perfections of the Godhead; in him, who at the very time his appearance in our flesh was

* Heb. i. 6.

foretold, had his dignity proclaimed by the prophetic herald in this magnificent manner:

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace! Isaiah ix. 6.

Had it been only declared by the mouth of the Lord of hosts, that one of such infinite dignity would be favourable to all humbled and repenting sinners, and would plead in their behalf before his Father, even this simple declaration ought to engage the confidence of the guilty: it would be a sufficient warrant to justify their dependence on him. For if the Redeemer be really possessed of infinite perfections, he must be a fit object of confidence to the soul, supposing he were pleased to declare his merciful disposition towards it. But he has done far more than simply declare his good-will to perishing sinners: the depth of his humiliation, and the sacrifice of his life, present to us indisputable and most affecting proofs that the Redeemer is worthy of our highest confidence. For the same infallible record which assures us that he was in the form of God, worshipped and acknowledged as such in heaven; thinking it no robbery, no usurpation of glory, to be equal with God; assures us likewise, that in pity to a ruined world, he was content to live and die *a substitute and surety for sinful man.*

In the fulness of time, according to that counsel of peace between the Father and the Son recorded in the fortieth Psalm, the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, was born into the world with a body prepared for him by the power of the Holy Ghost. He took not on him

the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Instead of appearing in that royal character which the degenerate Jews expected, as a visible conqueror of their political foes, he was made lower than men, and counted as no man! And though men of the lowest stations have generally the fewest troubles, *his* case was the reverse; the reverse both of the grandeur of princes, and of the tranquillity of the vulgar. Pre-eminence in the multitude and weight of sorrows was his only distinction. Yet a man of low condition, though overwhelmed with troubles, may possess a high reputation, at least one untainted; but Jesus descended even below this, and submitted to bear the imputation of being an impostor and a blasphemer. Nay, he stooped still lower, and not only stood as a criminal at the bar of Pilate, but appeared such by imputation before the Judge of the universe. *And the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all:* while other condemned malefactors are charged only with the crimes committed by themselves, and with but a few of these; the Scripture represents this unparalleled Sufferer as oppressed with the crimes of multitudes, in number like the sands on the sea-shore: a weight more heavy and terrible to sustain than we are able to conceive! But this we know, that the curse of the law was a weight sufficient to crush a world. We know that they who first experienced it, found it to be intolerable; for when legions of angels, which excel in strength, abused that strength against the law, it sunk them from the highest heaven to the lowest misery of hell.

This weight Jesus undertook to bear for us; *he was made sin,* that is, a sin-offering, *and a curse for us.* He

interposed his sacred body between the load of wrath from above, and us the heirs of wrath below. Instead of that high ineffable communion of love in which he dwelt with his Father, he was content to feel the exquisite sorrow of being forsaken of him. Till that distress never had Jesus made a request for pity: he sought none from Pilate; when the sympathizing daughters of Jerusalem wept over him, he meekly advised them to reserve their compassion for themselves and their children. But now at this hour, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he, who was *like a sheep dumb before its shearers,* is dumb no longer; the Lamb of God, when brought to this dreadful slaughter, must open his mouth, and Pity itself must cry for pity. It was the blasphemous language of his murderers, *Where is now thy God?* And behold, so exquisite are the pangs of his distressed soul, that something like the same language escapes from his own mouth;—he cries out, *My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?*

So particular is the Scripture testimony in describing the humiliation and death of the Redeemer: and not less explicit in ascertaining both the end for which he humbled himself to the death of the cross; and the everlasting benefits he thus secured to all his faithful dependents. Notwithstanding all the opposition he met with, both from the enemy of sinners and sinners themselves, he obtained a perfect conquest, and died with this transporting exclamation of victory in his mouth, *It is finished!* The debt of penal suffering, the debt of perfect obedience is paid to the law; the powers of hell are vanquished, and God is well pleased.

Ponder then upon this marvellous transaction; up-

on this horrible torment and death, sustained, not by an angelic or created being, but by *him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. Consider the depth of his abasement, and the extremity of his anguish; all submitted to with no other view than to make an atonement for sin, and to purchase redemption, even the forgiveness of sin, for all who should ever trust in his name! Consider this fact, and then say, Can even invention itself devise, or the most afflicted conscience desire a more sure Foundation to trust on for pardon and acceptance with God? What can the Law demand of you, either as an exemption from suffering its penalty, or as a title to eternal life, which this vicarious obedience and sacrifice of God manifest in the flesh has not abundantly provided in behalf of all true believers?

I will suppose your sins by their malignity and number to be enormous, and to cry with the loudest cry for vengeance: still; if in anguish of spirit for them, you humbly trust to Jesus for remission, can they have such weight, do you think, to condemn you, as the blood of an incarnate God to take them away?—Have your offences dishonoured God's law more than the obedience and death of the Redeemer have magnified it? Or have not those transgressions been fully expiated, for which the Lawgiver himself was put to death? Though you dare not risque your pardon on the vague notion of mere mercy, now that your understanding is enlightened, and your conscience faithful in its rebukes; though you dare not embrace the fashionable religion, which leaves such awful things as the justice of the Most High and the law of the Most Holy, destitute of their due honour; though you can

never trust to obedience and future amendment as any atonement for past transgressions; yet stedfastly fix your eyes on the matchless ransom paid down by Jesus on the cross. See there the glory of the holy God reconciled with the good of the humbled criminal! See there, the justice of God more awful than if mercy had been excluded, and mercy more amiable than if justice had been dispensed with. See, how vengeance and forbearance there meet together; vengeance on the person of the crucified Redeemer, and forbearance for his sake towards every believing penitent. See there, wrath and love kiss each other; wrath towards the divine Substitute, love to the insolvent and ruined sinner. By this mysterious sacrifice every honour done to the criminal is an honour done to the law, because he receives it only through the obedience and satisfaction paid to it by his Surety; and all the respect put upon the law adds respect also to the criminal, because of the divinity of him who undertook to bear his curse and pay his debt.

Is not this ransom then a solid ground for peace to the broken in heart? A transaction in which God holds forth his only begotten Son, nailed to a cross, *to be a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of all them that believe in Jesus?* Is it possible for the powers of darkness to form a cloud, through the gloom of which this most glorious truth will not be able to dart light and comfort? May our souls open to receive it! it is a beam from the face of the Redeemer, to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

Further: Still stronger will the grounds for confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ appear, when you take

into your view *the free and gracious manner in which you are invited to become a partaker of the blessings of redemption.*—The great generally *sell* even what they call their favours: long services or powerful recommendations are their inducements to confer dignity, or bestow wealth. But far otherwise, as our most impotent condition requires, is the case with respect to forgiveness purchased by the blood of Christ. No impossible or hard condition is previously required on the sinner's part; no works of righteousness are required to be *first* performed in your own strength, and then pleaded as your recommendation; no set of holy tempers, or stock of moral virtue, to be first acquired. All this righteous practice is to follow upon believing, and to be produced by strength and grace received, through constant application to the Redeemer. The invitation is conveyed in these most encouraging terms, *Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money;* (no one single valuable qualification) *yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* Isaiah lv. 1. *The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost;* to purchase pardon for rebels and enemies to God; of consequence, the only requisite to partake of his grace, is, that you behold yourself that perishing sinner that God saw you would be, when he delivered up his Son for our offences; and that you are glad to lay hold on this hope set before you. And surely the most fearful doubting mind cannot desire more encouragement to believe: the most dejected conscience cannot conceive a place of refuge more adapted to its distressed condition: nor can even the worst of sinners de-

sire more gracious advantages towards peace and reconciliation. *

* See Prayer the *Twelfth.*

SUNDAY XIII. CHAPTER XIII.

The Foundation of Dependence upon Christ for Pardon and Instruction.

SO important is it that man should place a full dependence upon Christ for the *Pardon of his sin,* that God has been pleased to confirm the declaration of his ability to save, by an unusual degree of evidence. He has displayed, as we have already seen, the divinity of his person, the merit of his death as an atonement, and the unbounded freeness of his invitation, in order to encourage man to put his trust in him. But besides these there are still further evidences of his power and willingness to save: let me refer you to *the intercession of Jesus,* who is become our great high-priest; and to the declarations of Scripture, that every one who depends on him shall abundantly receive the blessings which he needs. What a sure foundation for confidence to the humble repenting sinner does the office of Jesus, as high-priest, afford! *Every high-priest,* saith the Scripture, *taken from among men, is ordained for men;* for their spiritual interest and advantage; all his influence and power are to be employed in their behalf. With a view to the benefit of man was the office originally and entirely ordained

of God. And the offices appointed for him to perform, prove this: he was to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins; sacrifices, to make an atonement; and gifts, on account of which God might vouchsafe to restore his forfeited favour. With the same view the grand qualification indispensably necessary for the execution of this office, was a heart that knew how to have compassion on them that are ignorant and out of the way of duty and of safety.

Now this office of high-priest, and all the functions belonging to it, we are taught *were only designed to serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things;* in other words, to be an outward and visible way of instructing us in the nature of the office which the Lord Jesus Christ sustains in the highest heaven for sinners, and of the benefits they may expect from him. He is made an high-priest of good things to come; *he is entered, not with the blood of bulls and of goats into the holy place, which was the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us.* He is therefore under the strongest engagements of that merciful office which it pleased him to assume, to mediate for all that shall come to God by him. And lest we should imagine ourselves too mean to engage his pity, particular mention is made, that he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as we are; yet without sin. Therefore, from an experimental knowledge of the same difficulties and distresses as we are now enduring, he has that exquisite tenderness of sympathy with us, which would not otherwise have been possible. What then can warrant an unshaken confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon, if the knowledge of Him as

our great high-priest fails to do it? Is your heart broken for sin, your spirit wounded within you? Parley not with your fears, listen not to the accuser; look unto Jesus, your propitiation, your intercessor; as the wounded, tormented, dying Israelites looked unto the brazen serpent. Look unto him for healing and for life: look unto him who appears as your advocate, ever living to make intercession for sinners in your distressed condition. He must fail in the engagements of his office, and do violence to that mercy which constitutes his fitness for that office, before the humble dependence of a penitent sinner on his blood and intercession shall be disappointed.

If any thing can be added more to engage your confidence in the Redeemer for the remission of your sins when you are sorrowing for them, and to convince you on what a strong foundation it is built, it must be the *solemn repeated declarations of the word of God*, that the sacrifice of his only begotten Son is accepted in his sight, as a complete atonement for the sins of those who believe on his name; and that it shall be imputed to them in its incomparable efficacy, to save them from deserved wrath. And declarations of this purport are (blessed be God for his abounding grace) many in number; to select a few of the most striking ones, relating to the vicarious death and sacrifice of Jesus, will be sufficient.

Isaiah, in his most affecting detail of the Messiah's sufferings, after having expressly affirmed that Jesus suffered as a surety and substitute for us, *wounded for our transgressions*, and *bruised for our iniquity*; that *it pleased the Lord to bruise him*, and *put him to grief*, in

order that by bearing the tremendous curse in his own body, it might pass over the heads of the faithful, thus magnificently declares the efficacy of his sacrifice: *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities,* that is, bear them as the scape-goat did, carrying them away into the pathless inaccessible wilderness, so that they shall not be found when sought for by the malicious tempter.

In another place we are informed by the angel Gabriel, commissioned to revive the heart of the greatly-beloved Daniel; that when *Messiah the Prince was cut off,* in that oblation of himself on the cross, he accomplished a work suitable to his own infinite glory: *He finished the transgression,* by an expiation of it, and by redeeming all who should believe in him, from its curse. *He made an end of sin,* by delivering from its detestable dominion all who should flee to him for succour. *He made reconciliation for iniquity,* by bringing the faithful to possess peace with God, and by replacing them in his forfeited favour. *He brought in everlasting righteousness,* a righteousness whose virtue will continue to justify all that believe throughout all ages; and with which eternal life stands connected by the promise of God.

These glorious effects of the Redeemer's sacrifice were perfectly known to the innumerable millions of the heavenly host; therefore, so soon as Jesus appeared in our flesh, they filled the air with their presence, breaking forth into this congratulatory song of praise, (the same in import with Gabriel's message to the be-

loved Daniel,) *Glory to God in the highest; on earth, peace, good will towards men!*

The testimony of prophets and angels confirms, the immediate voice of God from heaven confirms: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* It is he, who by his life and death magnifies my law, restores my ruined creatures to life and happiness, and accomplishes a work of all others most pleasing in my sight.

The same strong attestations does the Redeemer himself give to the efficacy of his atoning death. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son* (gave him up, to suffer on the cross) *to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* In another discourse he declares, *He gave his flesh for the life of the world:* and just before his departure, that *He shed his blood for the remission of the sins of many.*

Consider and weigh well the force of all these testimonies, and you will be constrained to say; that nothing more could have been done to engage those who feel the guilt and misery of their sins, to place their whole dependence on Jesus Christ for pardon. It is not now possible for a penitent sinner to make a single objection which is not evidently answered. With equal propriety and mercy therefore is this call addressed to sinners of every denomination, who feel their misery and are athirst for pardon; *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* It was my body which bore your sins on the tree, when I suffered, *the just for the unjust.* It was my blood which was shed by the sword of Justice, when I suffered as your substitute. It was I, who be-

ing *the brightness of my Father's glory,* and *the express image of his person,* and *upholding all things by the word of my power, purged away your sins by the sacrifice of myself,* and *then sat down* your Mediator *on the right hand of the Majesty on high:* believe therefore on me, and you shall receive remission of sins.

Remission of sins, however, though a blessing most necessary to man, extends but to a part of his wants. As Adam's first disobedience sprung from his impious desire to be like God in knowledge, so the just punishment of his sin was the *extinction of all divine light* in his soul. Hence we, his fallen offspring, are born blind to God, and the things of God; though the knowledge of them is far preferable than life. Hence we are liable to perpetual delusion, and prejudice against the truth.

For our relief, therefore, in this case, we are commanded by God *to depend on the Lord Jesus for instruction and spiritual knowledge.* If you ask on what ground you may build such dependence, and what there is in Christ Jesus to assure you of success? The answer which the divine record returns, is fully satisfactory. God proclaims in the Old Testament, that he has given his Son *for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison-house,* Isaiah xlii. 6, 7. By his prophet Malachi he gives him a name most emphatically significant of his power to communicate knowledge. He calls him the *Sun of righteousness,* to assure us, that as the sun in the firmament dispenses its invigorating influence through all parts of the earth, unveils the face of every object in the visible creation, and discovers it in its true aspect; so the Redeemer, by his word and Spirit, disperses

the gross darkness of the human mind, makes divine truth visible and intelligible, and strengthens our dim faculties to behold the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. The same representation of the office of Jesus as a teacher, is again repeated by Zacharias, when, full of the Holy Ghost, he celebrates Christ's coming into the world in the gracious character of an instructor of those who were lying in gross darkness. He exalts our opinions of Jesus as *the day-spring from on high*, who, *through the tender mercy of our God*, came *to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet in the way of peace.* Luke i. 79. Attestations of the same truth are frequent in the Scriptures. The beloved disciple, who lay in the bosom of Jesus, expresses his ability to inform and teach us, by calling him the *Word;* by pointing him out as *the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;* in other words, as that matchless person, from whose word and Spirit proceeds all the divine knowledge which ever was, or ever shall be, among the children of men. To confirm these testimonies, the Redeemer bears record of himself in expressions of the same kind, and of the strongest import; *I, Jesus,* saith he, *am the bright and morning star;* chasing the darkness of sin and error from the mind, as that star ushers in the brightness of the day. Rev. xxii. 16. In a discourse with the Jews, who were endeavouring to ensnare him by subtilty, Jesus said, *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* John viii. 12. Is not this to assure us in the fullest manner, that he came to direct

sinners in the way of salvation by his word and Spirit, and that in consequence of this his office, whoever depends for teaching and guidance upon him, shall not continue in ignorance and error, but shall have the saving light of truth surrounding his path, and making the way plain before him, from earth to heaven, from peace to glory?

To these testimonies I shall only add what St. Paul was inspired to teach us upon the same subject. He declares that *Christ Jesus is made of God unto us,* not only righteousness and sanctification, but *wisdom;* because, through him, as a teacher sent from God, we may know all things necessary for our pardon, comfort, and salvation. 1 Cor. i. 30. In another place, that divine illumination, and those clear discoveries of God's glorious being and perfections, which the church receives from Christ, are thus emphatically expressed: *God who caused the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In Christ,* he saith again, as proposed and manifested to us in the Gospel, *are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;* in him they are covered under the veil of his humanity and deep humiliation. Observe the fulness of the expression; the apostle does not say *treasure* in the singular number, though this must have implied both the excellency and abundance of that knowledge, but *treasures.* He doth not say *many treasures,* though this would have greatly enlarged our conceptions; but he saith, *in whom are hid* all *the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Nothing pertaining to spiritual life and godliness, nothing in the least degree profitable for a poor, weak, helpless, sinful crea-

ture to know, can be imagined, which is not to be found in Christ Jesus, as an inexhaustible magazine, which the bounty of the God of glory has provided for the supply of our necessities.

Nor can it be thought that any or all of these Scriptures ascribe too much to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, when it is considered that the very end of his appearance was to manifest the name of God, and to give a complete revelation of his will and designs concerning us. Jesus not only spake the words of pure truth and righteousness, as the prophets before him, but with an infinite superiority over them all, exhibited a perfect model in his own example, both of faith and practice. And while other deceased prophets retain no influence to impress their words, this Prophet of the world declares, *I will send unto you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, he shall lead you into all truth; for, it is written, all his children shall be taught of God.*

Do you therefore painfully feel your ignorance in the things of God? Do you bewail the dulness of your intellectual faculties to apprehend spiritual objects? Are you concerned to find so much weariness in fixing your attention upon the Bible, when you behold that invaluable book? Behold your relief and remedy! Behold with joy, what a foundation there is for your dependence on Jesus Christ, to be taught all you need to understand! When you hear this representation of his character, that *he left the bosom of his Father to declare him unto us;* when you hear, that for this purpose he has not only given to his church his written word, to point out the way of life; but has

also promised to give it efficacy by the power of the Holy Ghost, can you wish for more? Are you grieved that you know God no better, are you athirst for instruction in righteousness? What can induce you to make application to the Lord Jesus Christ, if this encouragement from St. John fails? *We know,* saith he, *that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true.* 1 John v. 20. He has given us not only that intellectual faculty which distinguishes us from the animal world, for this was ever common to all men; he has given us not only the external revelation, which false pretenders to the faith have as well as ourselves; but he has given to us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God: a gift confined to those alone who depend upon Jesus as the truth and the life. Are you then crying out in that humble manner which your necessitous condition requires, "O! that God would "shew me the secrets of wisdom:—what I know not, "teach thou me?" You see on whom your help is laid: you see in this case your application to Christ must be daily and persevering. It is he only who can say, *Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength.* When blind Bartimeus cried, *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me, that I may receive my sight,* they that stood by said, *Be of good comfort, rise: he calleth thee.* Mark x. 49. The same compassionate call is addressed to you by Jesus enthroned in glory. *I counsel thee,* says he to every one in whose mind darkness and ignorance prevail, *to anoint thee with eye-salve,* that is, to apply to my word and Spirit, *that thou mayest see;* that thy understanding may be enlightened, that thou mayest be filled

with the knowledge of God, and have a right judgment in all things.

Further; As you stand in need of wisdom and teaching, that you may know the truth of God, so you in the same degree want light to *discover and baffle the devices of the devil.* To whom then shall you go to obtain such light but unto Jesus, before whom we are assured all things are open and naked, even the deepest counsels of the destroyer, and all his snares of cruelty? Jesus knows how, with equal ease and certainty, to confound his numberless contrivances, and infatuate even the spirit of all subtilty and malice. For this reason the very first name given to the Redeemer was this; The Bruiser of the serpent's head. He is the glorious Deliverer, who came to ruin Satan's schemes, and disappoint his contrivances to hurt and destroy the faithful. Hence it must follow, that Jesus knows how to deliver the godly out of every temptation, and to preserve them unto his own kingdom. Who then, if not this all-sufficient Person, is worthy to be relied on with unshaken confidence, by the children of ignorance and blindness? *

* See Prayer the *Twelfth.*

SUNDAY XIV. CHAPTER XIV.

The Foundation of Dependence on Christ for Victory over Sin.

WE have considered the fulness of help which is laid up in Christ for man, as subject to the curse of the Law and blindness of understanding; but a farther exertion of divine power is absolutely necessary to make him partaker of complete salvation. Man is naturally a *slave to earthly, sensual,* and *devilish tempers.* Covetousness or lewdness, envy or pride, command in his heart as on their throne. When their dominion is manifested by shame, loss, or inward vexation of mind, their natural and necessary effects; he wishes himself free; he determines, confident of his own strength, no more to be overcome. But, behold! the very next temptation adapted to stir up the evil which is in him, as easily prevails as the former did; so that soon disheartened by such repeated foils, and ashamed to confess his own vileness, he gives up the important contest, and begins to palliate that ignominious slavery, from which he knows not how to be delivered.

Now observation concurs with Scripture to prove, that superiority of wit, or an extraordinary share of natural abilities, though even improved by the advantages of polite education, do not enable men to stand before the power of their corrupted nature any more than savage ignorance: they can only gild those shackles which they cannot burst asunder, and slightly

conceal from the stranger's superficial eye what still defiles the inner man.

This spiritual bondage must always become exceedingly grievous to endure, wherever there is a right judgment of God and the nature of sin. Then will there be an earnest desire to obtain deliverance from Him alone who is able to bestow it. For this deliverance God commands us to depend on the Lord Jesus Christ. And to engage our utmost confidence, such a full display of his power is laid before us, as makes the suspicion of miscarriage to the last degree unreasonable. The ancient prophets, declaring the extent and irresistible force of his government, call him, *The Lord of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle; whose throne is heaven, and whose footstool is earth; who has the light for his garment, the clouds for his chariot, the thunder for his voice, and all the legions of angels for his servants.*

And lest the humiliation of the Redeemer should diminish our conceptions of his power to save, the glory he manifested in the days of his flesh is that which is circumstantially related. Innumerable multitudes of the wretched and diseased crowded round his divine Person, and instantly by him they were made whole. The dumb, the deaf, the lame, the blind, the dead, were all restored by his divine power to the blessing of life, or the enjoyment of their faculties. His authority over the whole creation is painted in the strongest colours. For though the winds and storms are mighty, yet Jesus in his low estate only rebuked them, and they were hushed in silence. The waves of the sea rage horribly, yet at his word they sunk into a perfect calm. Death and the grave, though inexora-

ble to, and invincible by, mortals, were not able for a moment to detain their prey when Jesus only spake; *Lazarus, I say unto thee, Arise.* The powers of darkness and the strength of hell, though mightier far than diseases, storms, or death, submit to him, and entreat his favour, as their irresistible, though offended, Lord and Sovereign. *

Further; for the greater encouragement of our faith and hope in Jesus, as a complete deliverer through his Spirit, from the tyranny of our sinful tempers, let it be duly recollected, that Jesus exhibited, when on earth, examples of his saving power. Publicans, accounted the worst of men, and harlots, the worst of women: these he delivered from the captivity of their lusts, and by them proclaimed that none can be so enslaved by sin, but he can make them free indeed. And to demonstrate this most transporting truth, which he preached with his own mouth, and confirmed by indubitable external evidence during his ministry, at the very hour of his death he still more gloriously displayed the same almighty power to destroy the dominion of sin in one of the most hopeless instances of its strength. Behold Jesus hanging on the cross: his visage lacerated and mangled, his body covered with marks of scorn, swelled with strokes of violence, bedewed from head to foot with bloody gore; behold him even in this condition exert the most astonishing act of power which men or angels can conceive; hear him say to the thief, who made his prayer to him, and placed his whole dependence upon him; hear him say, *This day shalt thou be with me in para-*

* Mark v. 7, 10.

dise; "I will carry thee up with me into heaven, as "a trophy of my victory over Satan, and will shew "thee there, as part of the spoils that shall adorn my "triumphs over hell." He snatches this abandoned sinner from the brink of destruction, as an earnest of the full recovery of all who should ever trust in him; saves one that seemed not only void of grace, but beyond its power; and sanctifies that heart in an instant, which had probably been for a long course, wallowing in sin!

In all these victories we may conceive the Redeemer to have acted with this double view; that he might fully ascertain his title to the character of the Messiah, as described in the Old Testament; and that he might lay at the same time a sure foundation for his church to trust on the might of his holy arm, to the end of the world.

If it be said, the Redeemer's death and burial in the grave, indicate his weakness; it is answered, that Jesus entered the grave not merely as a subject, but as an invader and conqueror. He stripped the king of terrors of his dominion, and rising on the third day, triumphed openly as the *resurrection and the life, in whom whosoever believeth shall never die.* The language of his resurrection was full of power; it confirmed the words of the prophet, *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* Isa. xxvi. 19.

But if these *acts* demonstrate the power of Jesus, and present him before our eyes as an object every way able to answer the dependence which we place on

him for deliverance from the power of sin, how much more is the ground of this dependence strengthened by the *declarations both in the Old and New Testament,* of his sufficiency for this work! Hear, how every doubt is obviated, and all despondency graciously reproved: *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.* Isa. xxxv. 4. *Behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work is before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* Isaiah xl. 10, 11. *He shall bring forth judgment unto truth,* that is, shall make all his dependents finally to triumph over sin and Satan. *I have given thee,* saith God the Father, *for a leader and commander of the people, to preach deliverance to the captives.* By the prophet Malachi we are assured, *He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and purge them,* that is, his faithful people, *as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.* St. Peter confirms these glorious declarations by proclaiming to all the Jews, enslaved by sin, and abandoned to the practice of wickedness as they were, that God having raised up his Son Jesus, had sent him to bless them, by turning every one of them from their iniquities.

St. Paul teaches us, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in his character and capacity of Mediator, is invested with absolute dominion; that he reigns as a rightful conqueror over all his enemies;* that he is a horn of

* 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26.

salvation to those that trust in his name; that he sits on a throne of glory till all opposition to his people and himself cease, and is utterly destroyed. For in this most encouraging light the exceeding greatness of his power to save is represented, when it is said, God hath *raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* Ephes. i. 20—23.

Magnify then as you please, the number and strength of temptations, the weakness of human nature, the power of confirmed ill habits, and the efforts of Satan; still, what are all these, even though united, before him *who gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?* What, before him whose office it is to turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and whose infinite bounty enriches the fallen soul with that holiness which makes it meet for heaven? Who, or what, are these spiritual tyrants, avarice or uncleanness, envy or malice, deceit or unbelief—by whom strengthened, and by whom abetted—that they should defy him, who hath all power in heaven and in earth to save from sin? Him, from whose overflowing fulness all the angels in heaven, and all the saints while on earth, receive their sanctification, and the spotless purity they will share with him through all eternity! If one person, relying with humility and perseverance on the power of Je-

sus, should perish, unsuccoured, and in his sins; how would the promises of God concerning the kingly offices of his Son be true? How could Jesus answer the character given of him in the record of God? One of these alternatives must therefore be maintained; either, that the character and office of Jesus are misrepresented in the Scriptures; or else, that whoever puts his trust in his power to save, shall have the victory over sin. The stubbornness of his will shall be brought to yield, his evil tempers shall be subdued, and he shall be preserved blameless in spirit, soul, and body.

What has been offered is sufficient to prove, that we have all possible encouragement to trust in Jesus the Redeemer for *wisdom, righteousness,* and *strength.* The only knowledge concerning his character which is farther necessary, is of *his temper and disposition towards sinners;* now, as is his majesty, so is his mercy; and he is as ready as he is able, to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. On this head what stronger testimonies can the most jealous suspicion desire, than he has given to us?

What means his deep humiliation? his pleadings with careless and obstinate sinners by day, and his midnight importunities with his heavenly Father for them? what mean his kind invitations? *Ho! every one that thirsteth, let him come unto me and drink: whoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out?* What can be the design of these tender expressions but to assure us of his willingness to receive with mercy those sinners, whatever they might have been in time past, who commit their souls unto him? What was it, tell me, if it was not fervent love, that made him so long

endure a condition in all respects so entirely opposite to his original glory; instead of Hallelujahs from choirs of angels, to hear the blasphemous insults of men cast on himself and all his actions; instead of the perfection of joy, to endure such sufferings that his heart in the midst of his body was even like melting wax, through the intenseness of the anguish that was upon him; instead of adoration from myriads of ministering spirits, to bear mockery and buffetings, the bloody scourge on his back, and on his face the nauseous spittle; instead of sitting on his throne high and lifted up, with the whole host of heaven worshipping him, saying, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory;* to hang upon a cross between two thieves, in the midst of insulting shouts and the frowns of eternal justice.

O! come hither, behold and see if there was ever love like this! Come and hear the voice which he uttered in the height of all his sufferings, for his *murderers; Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* Hear, and if you can, doubt; if it be possible, question his willingness to save those who depend upon him; *his* willingness, who prayed even for his bitterest enemies.

In the last place; we may as firmly confide in the Lord Jesus Christ for *eternal salvation*, as for *present* pardon, wisdom, righteousness, and strength. His dominion equally extends both over the world in which we dwell, and over that into which we enter after death. *Fear not*, he saith, *I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of*

death. It is he who hath overcome him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and has made his triumphant entry before all, and for all, who depend upon him; it is he who bids us trust in him, and not be afraid. Hear, with what affection and endearment he comforts his apostles, and all who should ever possess like precious faith with them in his name; *I go and prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.* And in his prayer for the salvation of all who should believe in him, he saith, *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.*

With what well-grounded comfort then, and with what abounding hope, are you warranted to trust in the Redeemer, both in life and in death! And, after having exercised continual faith in him, as a Saviour from the guilt, defilement, and strength of sin, from ignorance, and from all the enemies of your soul, how reasonably at the end of life may you copy the pattern of the first martyr to the Christian truth, and beholding by faith the object that was manifested to him, without a veil, say with your expiring breath, *Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* *

* See Prayer the *Twelfth*.

SUNDAY XV. CHAPTER XV.

The Divinity of the Holy Ghost.

THE work of man's salvation is represented in Scripture as engaging the joint agency of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. *God the Father* in infinite wisdom planned this amazing scheme, and provided himself a Lamb for a burnt-offering, a sacrifice to purge away sin. *God the Son* executed in his own person this plan, by submitting to be delivered for our offences, by rising again for our justification, and by interceding for us in heaven. *God the Holy Ghost* procures an effectual reception of this scheme of salvation, and sanctifies the soul for the everlasting happiness which he prepares it to enjoy.

Each of these persons who thus co-operate in man's salvation, must of necessity be really God, because no one could execute any part of this grand scheme pertaining to the soul. Who, for instance, besides the supreme Lawgiver himself, could admit an innocent substitute to become surety for a criminal, and bear his curse? or who, beneath the dignity of God, could have merit sufficient, by suffering, to atone for offences against the Majesty of heaven and earth? or to whom, besides God, doth the power greater than that of creation belong, of triumphing over our rebellious wills, and bringing them into captivity to the obedience of Christ?

Now, if the holy Scripture be full and explicit in

declaring the influence and interposition of each person in the blessed Trinity in the work of man's salvation; it must of necessity be the duty of a Christian to pay due attention to it, and to endeavour by devout meditation to impress upon his mind what God has revealed on this subject: revealed, not at all to teach us *how* the Father, Son, and Spirit are three persons in one eternal Godhead, (for this it never attempts,) but to inform us of our obligations to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and to teach us to live in such entire confidence in the mercy of God, and such devotedness to his service, as the knowledge of this most sublime and mysterious truth is designed to produce.

The Scripture character of God *The Father* has been already considered at large; and also that of God *The Son,* as he is proposed to us in his mediatorial office; it shall be our business therefore now to lay before you in one view, what the Scripture teaches of *the nature, person,* and *office* of *The Holy Ghost.* And may he himself, who is the Spirit of truth, give us to understand the things which belong to his glory!

First, With respect to the *nature* of the Holy Spirit, *that he is God,* the same in essence with the Father and the Son; is proved from Scripture in this plain and convincing manner. *All the properties of the Godhead are ascribed to him.* Now by what is the distinct essence of any being determined, but by its properties? Thus he who possesses the properties peculiar to a man, is on that very account esteemed one: by consequence, he who possesses the perfections pecu-

liar to God, must on that account be worshipped as God.

The Scripture then declares the Holy Ghost to be a *holy, eternal, infinite, almighty* Being. *Holy,* for in reference to his peculiar office of imparting holiness, and in exclusion of all creatures, he is called *the Holy Spirit,* Ephes. iv. 30. *Eternal,* that is, existing before all ages no less than in them all; thus the blood of Jesus, we are told, was offered under his influence by the name of the *Eternal Spirit.* A title this, which is never ascribed to any but God himself; for though angels have existed so many ages before our world, and will never cease to be, yet we no where read of an eternal angel. *Infinite,* for he *searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God,* 1 Cor. ii. 10. *Almighty,* because at the creation of the world, *The Spirit,* we are assured, *moved upon the waters;* by his operation and influence on chaos, he formed it into order and beauty; and from his energy the world is as it were created anew day by day: *Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.* Psalm civ. 30.

In the dispensations of grace also the almighty power of the Holy Ghost is no less conspicuous than in the natural world. The humanity of the Lord Jesus was formed by his overshadowing with his influence the blessed Virgin. By him Jesus was sent to preach the Gospel and discharge his ministry: by him carried into the wilderness, and anointed with the oil of gladness above all kings and priests that had been, or ever should be. In a word, in all that Jesus did on earth

as our mediator, he was both appointed and supported, we are expressly taught, by the Holy Ghost. And can you require a more complete proof than this of the Godhead of the Holy Ghost? Jesus, as mediator, *had a name given him which is above every name;* to such a high degree above every other name, that all in earth and heaven must bow their knee before him; and yet, considered as mediator, he is still inferior to the Holy Spirit, because he was consecrated and enabled by him to discharge that very office. But since nothing in earth or in heaven is in dignity above the Mediator, but God only, it plainly follows that the Holy Spirit must be God, of one and the same essence with the Father, as the Scripture teaches, and as the Christian Church has ever believed.

The Holy Ghost performs works proper to God: of this nature are the renovation and sanctification of the soul. Even the conversion of those most abandoned sinners at Corinth, in the time of St. Paul, is ascribed to this divine agent: *Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are cleansed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,* 1 Cor. vi. 8.

It was the Holy Ghost who endued the apostles with their miraculous powers, laid the foundation of the Christian church, and published its laws. He separated Paul and Barnabas, and *appointed their mission*, which is the prerogative of the supreme Director. A dispensation of such infinite moment belongs properly to God; and, of all others, is apparently the least communicable to a creature. And in the consummation of all things, the Spirit will work a work altogether divine, the master-piece of all he has done. It

will be a full demonstration of his power, to a degree which can belong to none but God. He will restore the bodies of the faithful from the dust, and clothe them with glory and immortality: for, *If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* Rom. vii. 11.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit must be the same in essence with the Father and the Son, *because the honour and worship due only to the true God, are given to him.* This worship and glory, of which God declares himself to be jealous, and which he will not give to another, consists in swearing by him; and in making appeals to him touching the sincerity of what we affirm, according to that command which God has himself given in this matter, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and swear by his name.* It consists also in making him the only object of our faith, hope, and obedience: for, *Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.* Jer. xvii. 5. God only is to be regarded as the fountain of benediction and grace; he is alone to be implored for the continuance of both; he is to be supremely obeyed as the only one whom we must fear to offend. The principal end of divine worship is thus to ascribe unto God the honour due unto his name. But we meet with instances in holy Scripture, where all these particular acts of supreme adoration are paid to the Holy Ghost. Thus St. Paul swears by him, and appeals to him as a witness of the sincerity of his good-will towards his brethren the Jews; *I say the truth in Christ,*

I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost. Thus the Spirit is proposed as the object of our faith, hope, and obedience, equally with the Father and the Son. For when we are baptized into each of their names, what is the import of this devout dedication, but that we entirely surrender ourselves in faith and obedience to this sacred Trinity? He is implored also, together with the Father and the Son, as the fountain and author of all the blessings and graces of the Gospel. The church of Christ from the beginning, has ever concluded her public and solemn worship of God with this prayer, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.* We are commanded to dread offending him; we are assured, that whoever blasphemes his honour is accounted guilty of a crime of the deepest dye: *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.* Matt. xii. 31, 32.

Thirdly, the same infinite glory which is ascribed to God, and the same self-abasement of men and angels which is exercised under a sense of his immediate presence, are ascribed also to the Holy Ghost, and exercised before his adorable presence; and therefore he must be God. Can you find any description of the glory of God more grand and striking than the vision of Isaiah, related in the sixth chapter? The prophet *saw the Lord,* we are told, *sitting upon a throne, high*

and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Then said I, Wo is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips. I shall not here insist upon the repetition of the epithet *holy* three times, to prove that the angels were paying adoration to the Trinity in Unity: it sufficiently appears from the inspired declarations of the apostles. As to God the *Father,* none dispute that the worship might be justly addressed to him; with respect to the *Son,* our Lord directly avows that Isaiah spake these things when he saw *his* glory;* that the *Spirit* was comprehended in this object of the adoration of heaven, is evident from hence; that the Lord of Hosts, which at this very time spoke to him, is expressly declared by St. Paul, (Acts xxviii. 25.) to have been the Holy Spirit himself; *Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, &c.*

Fourthly, The Spirit is *exalted above the rank of creatures;* he must therefore be God, since there is no middle state betwixt the Creator and the creature. And that he is exalted above the rank of creatures is evident; because he is never spoken of or represented as a worshipper of God. The relation of all creatures to God and their dependence upon him, are necessary obligations, binding them to do him homage. And

* John xii. 41.

the more excellent their endowments are, and the higher their obligations rise, the more prompt and active will they be in ascribing to God the honour due unto him. Accordingly the Scripture frequently represents the whole creation by a figure, and angels and men, in a proper sense, as employed in ceaseless praises and adoration of God. But whence comes it, if the Spirit also be a creature, that no mention is made of him by the sacred writers as a worshipper of God? Is it not strange, indeed, that these inspired men should have forgotten that Spirit, which, if he be a creature, should have led this concert of praise, and been the principal person in it? Was it not highly needful to make mention of Him, in order to prevent error and idolatrous worship? The total silence therefore of the oracles of God on this important matter, is a strong evidence that, the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus Christ, considered not the Holy Ghost as a creature, but as God with the Father and the Son.

Fifthly; Lest it should be said, that the Spirit *is no more than a quality in God,* which cannot subsist, or be distinguished as, a person in the Godhead, he has a name given to him, significative at once both of his essence and energy. The term Holy Spirit implies both that his essence is spiritual, and also that in the dispensation of grace it is his energy which produces holiness in the soul. Now as the spirit within a man, by which he observes his own thoughts, is not a quality, but something really distinct from his body and from his thoughts; so this Spirit, which knows the thoughts of God, which even *searches the deep things of God,* must be a person distinct from the Father, who is thus known by him.

He has all personal actions ascribed to him; *He shall not speak of himself, but what he has heard that shall he speak;* He rejoices and is grieved; He approves and condemns; He convinces the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. And when Peter was still doubtful of the import of the heavenly vision which he had seen, *The Spirit said unto him, Behold three men seek thee.* Acts x. 19. But all these must pass as expressions without any signification, unless they are allowed to prove the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost.

Thus it appears from this summary view of the Scripture evidence, that the Holy Ghost is possessed of the essential attributes of God; that he performs the works proper to God; that he receives the honour due unto God alone; that he stands exalted above the rank of creatures. Shall it then be said, after all this proof, that he is not by nature, God with the Father and the Son? By no means. These Scripture evidences, considered each apart, are decisive in determining the glory and godhead of the Holy Ghost, and, united together, admit of no reply, but such cavils as pride and infidelity are never at a loss to make against the plainest truths. They are fully sufficient to confirm our faith in the article of the glory and godhead of the Holy Ghost. And as to those who will contradict and blaspheme, on account of the difficulties which occur in explaining this subject, it must be observed, that all the peculiar doctrines of revelation, as well as this, become to such, matter of dispute *first*, and then are rejected because incomprehensible; till at length God's blessed system of truth, which none of the wise men of this world knew, is reduced

to nothing more than those maxims of morality which the philosophers of old delivered without the help of revelation; and which the Deists now oppose to it, as a sufficient guide to duty and happiness. But whether this be rationally to interpret Scripture, or covertly to renounce all subjection to the book of God, judge ye !*

* See Prayer the *Thirteenth*.

SUNDAY XVI. CHAPTER XVI.

The Office of the Holy Spirit.

IT is not enough that our judgment should be fully informed concerning the personal glory and divinity of the Holy Ghost: a Christian must also know to what great purposes that infinite, almighty, eternal Spirit, exercises *his office in the Church of Christ;* and in what way his influences are exerted. For unless we have a clear and distinct knowledge of this, we can never ascribe to the Holy Ghost the glory of his own work in our souls on the one hand; nor, on the other, be secured from dangerous delusion, and from mistaking some creature of a brain-sick imagination for the work of the Spirit of God. Both these evils will be happily prevented by firmly adhering to our infallible guide the Scripture; which is not more full in declaring the divinity of the Holy Ghost, than in determining precisely, the nature and the effects of his inestimable influence.

To him, we are taught, is intrusted the arduous work of supporting the cause of God and Christ against a sinful world, and of making it triumphant over all opposition, in that measure which seems best to unerring wisdom. By the secret yet mighty energy of the Holy Ghost, the foundation of Christian religion is laid in the soul of the believer; by him maintained, and at length completed. The foundation of Christian religion, as the term imports, is a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a sincere love to his person. Till this knowledge and this love possess your soul, though you may do many things which are commanded by God, and seem by profession a Christian; you still want the root of all acceptable obedience in your heart; according to that express declaration from Christ, *If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.* John xii. 26. Which intimates that he will honour no one beside. But if you consider the account given in Scripture of the condition the world was in when the name of Jesus was first preached in it, or of the natural blindness of man in all ages to the truths of God, you will acknowledge that wherever the glory of Jesus is worthily apprehended and effectually imprinted, it must be owing to the interposition of the Holy Ghost, and his influence on the mind.

That true and worthy acceptations of the Redeemer, that lively and lasting impressions of his excellency were owing to the Holy Ghost, when men were first called Christians, no one can doubt. At that time, to entertain becoming thoughts and to feel suitable impressions of the Redeemer's glory, was directly contrary to the united force of inveterate prejudice, corrupt education, and every scheme of worldly inte-

rest. For the illustration of this point, suppose yourself an inhabitant either of Jerusalem or of Rome, at the time when Christ was first preached; when Pharisaism or Sadducism reigned throughout the one; and the most impure idolatry, propagated from age to age, triumphed in the other: suppose, that in this situation you had heard an apostle of the Lord call aloud upon you, commanding you in the name of God to confess the sinfulness of your sin, and to flee for refuge from deserved wrath to Jesus Christ; that this apostle, instead of concealing the meanness and weakness in which Jesus Christ lived, the shame and pain in which he died, told you that on his cross he made atonement for sin, bought you with the price of his blood, that you might live in subjection to him as your sovereign Lord; that he possessed irresistible power to save or to destroy, and unsearchable riches to reward and bless his faithful people; suppose that he concluded with a most solemn asseveration, that if you refused the call you heard, and were not united to this man Christ Jesus, as your only Saviour, you must feel indignation and wrath from God for evermore. Instantly upon such a declaration your hearts tell you, that in the circumstances above described, bitter and disdainful prejudice would have shewn itself against the messenger. The life of Jesus, which innumerable slanders had represented as infamous, his death, in your apprehension to the last degree ignominious, would have made you treat the report as the most palpable lie ever forged to deceive. Accustomed from childhood to worship either false gods, or to trust in the true God without a Mediator, a sacred horror must have chilled your blood upon hearing your idols blas-

phemed, or Jesus glorified as one with God; while every desire remaining in your soul, of esteem with men, of sinful pleasure, or of happiness from the world, must have inflamed your rage against a doctrine, which, if received, was sure, like a pestilential wind, to blast them altogether.—To penetrate through such a cloud of darkness, what is the light of reason? to balance against such bitter prejudice, what the force of moral persuasion? to make such a sacrifice of wealth, of ease, of character, and become as it were the offscouring of all things, even to be deemed a curse upon the earth that bears you, what the power of human resolution?* Yet all this sacrifice was understood and considered; it was a certain consequence evident before the eyes of all who joined themselves unto the Lord Jesus Christ; who, on account of the odium cast upon his name in every place where the Gospel first came, is styled *He whom the nation* ABHORRETH.

Not only to counteract, but entirely to eradicate this deep-rooted enmity against the Redeemer, the Gospel is to be preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The apostles first were to receive power, after that the Holy Ghost was come upon them. Thus armed, they were to be witnesses unto Jesus, that is, of the redemption that is in him, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto

* The unlearned Reader is to be informed, that all the primitive apologists for our most holy faith, take notice of the charge brought against the Christians, as the procuring cause of all the public calamities inflicted on the Pagans; and that these, in their blind and cruel superstition, thought they did their gods service by putting them to death.

the uttermost parts of the earth. This eternal and almighty Spirit, by imparting to them miraculous gifts, bore down the opposition of prejudice, of education, and of worldly interest; and exerting his gracious influence on the mind at the time he was appealing by miracles to the evidence of sense, he made the glory of the Lord appear with such transcendent brightness, that thousands were added to his church, and ready to suffer death for his name's sake.

Thus in an outward and visible manner the Holy Ghost fulfilled the Redeemer's promise, while he laid the foundation of true Faith in the soul of every one that believed. In this manner he testified of Jesus; he glorified him. In this manner he reproved the world of *sin*, in their contemptuous refusal to believe in Jesus as the only Saviour; of *righteousness* in the person and cause of Christ, since God had borne such testimony to him; of the excellency of that righteousness he accomplished, living and dying in obedience to the law of God; and of the necessity of it, as imputed to believers for their complete justification. He convinced the world of *judgment*, in giving them to behold with their own eyes the throne of Satan cast down; his collusive oracles silenced, his temples deserted, abhorred, and thousands upon thousands of his miserable captives set at liberty.

This great effect must not be supposed to have been produced by the mere display of miracles to the senses; it evidently discovered a positive influence exercised upon the mind. This is exemplified in the prayer of the great apostle for the church at Ephesus. By the miracles wrought before them, they were so far impressed with a knowledge of the truth of the

Gospel, as highly to esteem the much-despised, much persecuted name of its ever-blessed Author. Nevertheless, the apostle makes a clear distinction between this effect, flowing from the evidence of the miracles which were wrought in attestation of the Gospel, and the internal gracious influence of the Holy Ghost on the mind. He prays therefore that God would grant unto them the grace of his Spirit, that *the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know what was the hope of their calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of his power towards us that believe.* This goes much deeper than the force of miracles alone could reach. It implies a transforming knowledge of those sublime truths which miracles alone can never produce, and a happy experience of the certainty of the words of truth from their vital and internal operation.

It is evident, then, that it was the power of the Holy Ghost which produced conviction and faith in the minds of those who heard the Gospel preached *by the apostles,* and which laid the foundation of *the primitive church.* But it may be said, "There does not exist *in* "*the present day* the same necessity for his agency. "The circumstances of the Christian world are quite "different. Now, instead of blasphemous insults of- "fered to the name of Jesus, he is adored as God in "the daily service of our established church. Instead "of bitter prejudices of education being generally en- "tertained against his death as a sacrifice for our sins, "we are pledged by baptism in our earliest infancy to "receive it as our dearest hope. Instead of suffering "persecution from our relations, because we profess

" ourselves the disciples of Christ, we should give of-
" fence to them were we not to do so. This altera-
" tion in the state of the world has therefore removed
" the necessity which before existed for the agency of
" the Holy Ghost. We accordingly no longer see a
" single miracle wrought in confirmation of the truth
" of the Gospel, now that its own establishment, the
" most convincing of all miracles, has taken place."
Thus, because the extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost have ceased, the necessity and efficacy of his influence at present is absolutely denied by some, and received with doubt and suspicion by many; and all that has been so plainly inculcated in Scripture of his teaching, his strength, and his comforts, has been injuriously confined to former ages. A mistake this, destructive of all vital religion: a mistake proceeding from utter ignorance or impious disbelief of the natural blindness of man to the truths of God, and of his aversion to receive them with an obedient heart. For if the Scripture account of the blindness of the human understanding and the depravity of the heart be received, it must follow that man of himself cannot receive and come into subjection to the truth of God, though the rage of Jews and Gentiles were supposed to be entirely removed, and the truth of the Gospel revelation were allowed. *The natural man,* the man who acts only upon the principles of natural reason, and seeks no illumination in his understanding from the Holy Ghost, *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,* (1 Cor. ii. 14.) in their divine truth, excellence, and glory; they can be discovered by none who are not enlighten-

ed by the Spirit of God. It follows from this declaration, that a true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of salvation by him, must be the production of the Holy Ghost as much at this very hour, as when the apostles first planted churches in the name of Jesus. The Holy Ghost must *take of the things which are Christ's,* and by his powerful effectual teaching *shew them unto us.* Otherwise the Redeemer will never be exalted and extolled, nor receive any heart-felt adoration for all his kindness towards us. What was the work of the Holy Ghost immediately after our Lord's ascension, is still his work with every one that believes to the saving of his soul; the exhibition of the external miracles, which accompanied it in old time, only excepted.

The *proof of this assertion,* so much questioned now, and so often vilified as enthusiasm, I shall endeavour to evince from *that most instructive text* on this subject, which has been already considered in its primary sense, and as it related to the apostolic age.

When the Comforter is come, he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me. The sin of overlooking the Son of God, so as to exercise no dependence on him for righteousness and strength, is not perceived by man till renewed by the Holy Ghost, though he may acknowledge the truth of the Christian Creed. Deceit and fraud, envy and malice, with the crimes destructive to society, are generally reprobated, and their evil is manifest. But the great sin of entertaining such thoughts of ourselves and of our own virtues, as do in fact render all the names of honour we give unto Christ merely titular: this sin, most in-

jurious to the perfections of God, you never see in the catalogue which unenlightened man draws up against himself. He can approach the holy, the jealous God in prayer without fear or suspicion of his displeasure, though he never committed his cause to the appointed Mediator, nor laid his sacrifice upon that altar, which alone can sanctify it in the sight of God.

To reprove for this sin in particular, is the work of the Holy Ghost. He it is who must open your eyes, if they are ever opened, to see your own sinfulness, and to loathe yourself before your Maker, for the mean thoughts, the grovelling apprehensions, which, notwithstanding the declarations of the Bible, and your pretended belief of it, you have had concerning the Lord's Christ, the Rock of ages, the Beloved of the Father. It is by the Holy Ghost, you must be enabled to say with firm reliance on him, that *Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.* By his influence it is, that you will ever so behold the Saviour as to believe in your heart, and to confess with your mouth; *that if any man love him not, that man is anathema, maranatha,* accursed of God; and unless he repents of this great wickedness, sure to be condemned by the Lord when he cometh to judge the world. And when the sin of not depending on Jesus, and not honouring him as the Father is honoured, is thus clearly perceived and heartily detested; it is not flesh and blood which have made this revelation, no; nor barely the written word of God, (for long after *that* was allowed by you to be the truth, no such effect followed;)—but it is owing to the Spirit of truth, who has communicated to you this most precious knowledge.

Again, *When the Comforter is come,* saith our Lord, *he shall reprove the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father.* To be received into favour with God, by virtue of what another has done; and to confess that the life and death of Jesus are of such efficacy as to bring down blessing and salvation on every sincere dependent upon him for righteousness, is a mystery offensive to the haughty spirit of man in its natural state.—Still, if left to ourselves, though the Bible is in our hands, though we profess a sacred regard for its contents, we shall go about to establish our own righteousness; we shall stand upon our own personal worth before God, as the foundation of our eternal hopes. Under the accusations of conscience, we shall have recourse to our own frailty and the strength of temptation, as our advocates; to our repentance and amendment, as our propitiation. For so inveterately, through the corruption of our natures, are we prepossessed in favour of our own virtues, and even of our feeblest attempts to be virtuous, that we can be as confident, as if we were as holy as the law of God requires us to be.

It is the work of the Holy Ghost to reprove the world for this self-exalting lie: for this hateful overrating our unworthy tainted performances, our much-blemished obedience. The eternal Spirit only can overthrow such vain confidence, and can establish a persuasion in the mind directly opposite to it; namely, that *Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;* that in consequence of this, we are always accepted, even after our highest possible advancement in holiness on earth, not for our own

sake, but for the sake of Christ; and that his access to the Father in the character of Mediator, is all our hope; that though unfeigned repentance, sincere love to God, and universal obedience to his commandments, are and must be our vouchers that we belong to Christ; yet, neither singly nor altogether do they make reconciliation for the least of our sins; that Jesus alone accomplished a work, impossible to any creature, too mighty even for angels to attempt, when he bled on the cross, and cried out, *It is finished!*

But till the Holy Ghost convince us of the necessity and glory of this righteousness, it is an offensive subject. Such exaltation of the Saviour's obedience and death will be construed into a disparagement of personal virtue. The search after the gift of justification unto eternal life, *freely through the redemption that is in Jesus,* will be deemed a contempt of good works. The Spirit of truth must exert his gracious influence to remove this natural blindness, and subdue this stubborn prejudice; and then, that merit which Jesus ever lives to plead before the Father, for the church purchased by his own blood, will be all your salvation and all your desire.

In one instance more, the text under consideration declares the work and influence of the Holy Ghost: *He shall reprove the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged;* that is, he shall convince men of the complete victory which Jesus has obtained over sin, the world, and Satan, in order to make all who believe in him, happy partakers of the same.

Subjection to sin, although the vilest servitude and basest vassallage, is too often earnestly contended for. Every man in the world, it is said, has his foible;

that is, in the language of politeness, some sin, or evil temper, that enslaves its unresisting victim. Like the dastardly unbelieving spies sent into the land of Canaan, men magnify to an enormous size the force of temptation, and the weakness of the flesh, forgetting the power of God, and then say, Who can stand before these?

The Holy Ghost, who is the grand agent for the glory of Christ, convinces us that we err in this matter, not considering the power of the Redeemer. It is his office to assure the heart that *the prince of this world is judged,* already dethroned and vanquished by Jesus: to persuade us that the working of his Spirit, *which worketh mightily in them that believe,* is infinitely stronger than the combined force of all outward opposition, and of all inward corruption: to demonstrate to us, that if we are doing what is forbidden, if we are enslaved by pride or discontent, intemperance, or uncleanness, covetousness, or envy, it is because we will not in earnest seek deliverance from such hateful tyrants.

In this manner, as in the apostles' days, the Holy Ghost continually operates upon the mind of every one that believes in Jesus. Now, as then, a *man cannot enter into the kingdom of grace, except he be first born of water and of the Spirit.*

And while the Holy Ghost testifies of Christ, and glorifies him in his person and undertakings; his influence, we must observe, is a thing quite *distinct from those means by which it is conveyed:* so that wherever proper convictions of the Redeemer's person and salvation are cordially received, it is not to

the means, but to the Spirit working by them, that we must attribute the enlightening and renewing of the mind. This important doctrine is repeated again and again in Scripture, and must therefore never be overlooked by us. Thus it is written of the degenerate idolatrous Israelites, *Hear ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.* Isai. vi. 9, 10. Here is the outward call of the word, on the one hand, but on the other a refusal of the inward and spiritual grace, on account of their insupportable provocations. The alarming expressions, *Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes,* cannot possibly mean that *God* actually *inspired Israel* with contempt for his holy word, or disaffection towards it; but they mean that such hardness of heart and disaffection must always follow, where the Spirit of grace is withdrawn; because he alone opens the eyes of the understanding, and unstops the ears which are deaf to the words of God's book. In confirmation of the same truth, it is recorded, that God *opened the heart of Lydia, to attend to the things spoken by St. Paul.* In this instance you very distinctly mark the inspired preacher on the one hand, declaring the whole counsel of God, and offering the knowledge of all that is externally needful to the conversion of the soul; and on the other you observe the God of all grace exercising his blessed and powerful influence, by which the apostle's discourse was successful, and attained the end for which it was delivered. And lest these declarations should be considered as extraordinary, St. Paul teaches

us *generally* to distinguish between the means and instruments, and the grace of the Holy Spirit from whom all their beneficial effects proceed. He puts this interrogation; *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed as the* Lord gave *to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.* 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6. Mark here, how totally distinct from each other are the means of grace, and the eternal Spirit to which they owe their efficacy. Of course we must allow that the foundation of the Christian religion is laid by the power of the Holy Ghost in every believer, and that his work and influence are at this hour as real and successful with the faithful, as they were when signs and wonders were done by him through the hands of the apostles.

From what has been offered, we may understand clearly the permanent work and internal operation of the Holy Ghost, and know whether we are the happy subjects of his influence ourselves, by considering what impressions the word of truth has made upon our minds.

But besides this, the Scripture teaches us to look upon the Holy Ghost *as the author of the sanctification* which is wrought in the hearts, and appears in the lives of believers; and that by this sanctification, his in-dwelling presence and effectual operation may be known with the greatest certainty and preciseness. If you feel a sincere love to God for sending his Son into the world as the propitiation for sin, this love is no more the natural growth of your heart, or acquired simply by your own reflections and contemplations, than the beneficial grain which enriches

spontaneously produced without seed or culture. *It is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost given unto you.* If the effect of this love be joy, or that delightful sensation which results from the consideration of great good obtained, or expected, from the God of your salvation; this sensation, in honour of its divine and gracious Author, is called *Joy in the Holy Ghost.* If you possess an internal settled tranquillity, while God and eternal judgment are in your thoughts, through Jesus Christ, *by whom you have received the atonement,* in the place of that guilty uneasiness or stupid insensibility which you shewed before, at the mention of such awful subjects; the marvellous change claims a divine parent, and is expressly declared to be *the fruit of the Spirit.* If possessing in your heart the heavenly treasure of love, peace, and joy, you are patient under repeated injuries, gentle under exasperating provocations, kind according to your ability, meek so as to evidence the humble opinion you entertain of yourself, the good-will you feel towards all men; this union of amiable tempers cometh from above. It is the image and superscription of one sanctified by the Spirit, and expressly said to be *his fruit.* There is not a duty we are called to perform, not an evil temper we are required to vanquish, but we are directed in Scripture to seek for the aid of the Spirit of God, that our endeavours may be crowned with success. We are taught that he *helps our infirmities in prayer;* that on this account he is called the *Spirit of grace and supplication.* We are commanded to *pray in the Holy Ghost;* which plainly implies, that as in prayer we must seek his sanctifying grace in order to do all other duties, so must we acknowledge

and depend upon his assistance for the right discharge of the duty of prayer itself. This is plainly marked in the Scripture account of the acceptance of our holy duties. It teaches us, that all true Christians *have access to the Father through the Mediator by one Spirit.* Ephes. ii. 18. So in discharging the duty of praise, when Christians are exhorted to be much employed in the praises of God, they are exhorted to be *filled with the Holy Ghost.* And this operative influence of the Holy Ghost is not spoken of merely as a privilege which God promises, but a duty which he requires. From whence it is evident, that without him all our services will want the very soul which should animate them, and be as a maimed sacrifice. In a word, it is to denote the never-ceasing influence and operation of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of all the faithful in Christ Jesus, that their life is expressed in these terms, a *being*, a *walking*, and *living in the Spirit.**

* See Prayer the *Thirteenth.*

SUNDAY XVII. CHAPTER XVII.

The Properties of the Spirit's Influence.

WE have already discoursed upon the personality and nature of the Holy Spirit; we have also endeavoured to learn from Scripture what purposes his influence is designed to effect. It remains now that we should explain, in order to prevent enthusiasm, the properties of his operation, and that we should also expose the impious, though too prevalent error, of

denying the reality of his agency upon the hearts of them that believe.

First then, *This influence of the Holy Spirit is secret;* but *discernible only by its fruits.* The Spirit is not to be understood as using violence or constraint on man, but as acting in a way similar to what we observe in the established course of nature. Accordingly, the prophets, the apostles, and the Son of God, refer us to the growth of the vegetable world as an illustration of the Spirit's influence. As the juices of the earth are first absorbed by the root, thence gradually ascend the trunk, and thence are diffused to the branches, producing blossoms and fruits to the admiration of every spectator, though the most penetrating eye cannot discern how,—So it is with the agency of the Spirit. The life of holiness in the soul of one born of the Spirit appears in his actions, discourse, desires, affections, and most secret thoughts. Every one that diligently observes him can perceive the excellent fruits of this life; but the Author of it is invisible, and the method by which it has been produced and maintained is incomprehensible.

Secondly; Though the Spirit's influence be secret, silent, and not to be observed but by its fruits, it *is not on that account less powerful in the effects produced.* The new creature in Christ Jesus, is born to conflict, toil, and labour. Born for fight, and intended for victory; but not at present formed to enjoy, so much as to act. A power, therefore, proportioned to the difficulties with which a Christian has to struggle, and to the enemies with whom he has to contend, must be continually supplied. And this is granted: *Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world;* the love of

its pleasures cannot corrupt him, nor the fear of its frowns dismay him; he marches on in the strength of God, and will not be turned out of the path of his duty. But the influence by which such a victory is maintained, must be full of energy; and those who stand in this condition, must be *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*

Thirdly, the influence of the Holy Ghost *entirely corresponds with the written word,* and is preserved and increased by *the use of the means of grace.* He makes no new revelations; but gives success and efficacy to what is already revealed. He accomplishes no other change in the habits, sentiments, and feelings of the soul, than what the sacred oracles point out, and such as to unprejudiced reason must appear excellent and desirable. He works by means apt and suitable in themselves for the maintenance and increase of holiness, though his influence be entirely distinct in itself, from those means. As the life of the body, though upheld by a divine power from moment to moment, is not maintained miraculously, but by the use of food, rest, and sleep; so the soul of the regenerate, that walks in the Spirit and lives in the Spirit, *desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby;* he prays and watches; and, by the use of his enlightened sanctified reason, he avoids what would endanger his soul, and chooses that by which it can be profited.

Fourthly, The influence of the Holy Ghost *is various in the degrees of its communication and operation.* All who are the blessed partakers of the Holy Ghost, not only differ from others who share the same privilege, but from themselves at different seasons, in the

degree of benefit they receive. Some have much more light and joy, strength and vigour, than others; and there is often a quick succession of peace and trouble, of tranquillity and conflict. But this variety respecting those who are under the government of the same Spirit, is generally owing to the different degrees of watchfulness, diligence, and fidelity in the use of the talents already committed to their care. *The Spirit,* we are taught, *is often grieved,* and in a degree *quenched* by carelessness, neglect, and much more by a fall into some known sin. In such cases the paternal justice of God requires that proper rebukes should be given: that his children, feeling their own deadness and cheerless thoughts, may be more vigilant for the time to come, and avoid all undutiful deportment. For the same reason, in order to encourage and reward the zealous obedience of those who more carefully and faithfully adhere to God, studying to serve him with their whole hearts; the Father and Son will abundantly manifest their favour to them by the Holy Spirit, and come and make their abode with them.

We have now explained with sufficient copiousness the nature of the Holy Spirit's influence; it remains only that we should conclude this subject with a remark upon the impiety of the opinions but too fashionable in the present day, which *vilify his gracious operation as the chimera of a heated brain, and the reverie of enthusiasts.* To cover the impiety of such opinions, it is common to urge the bold and shameless pretences of enthusiasts to the influence of the Holy Ghost, and to appeal to our ignorance of any such influence on our own minds. Arguments these as frivolous and

vain, as the opinion they are urged to justify, is impious in the sight of God. For what can possibly be conceived more weak than to ridicule and explode a doctrine merely because it has been abused to purposes totally opposite to its real tendency? If there be any force in this argument, we must renounce the use of reason, no less than the belief of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. For what can be more hurtful to society, what more injurious to the honour of God and the well-being of man, than that licentiousness which many of the loudest declaimers upon the excellence of reason have recommended in her name? If the foolish jargon used by wild visionaries, who falsely lay claim to the Spirit's influence, to sanction their nonsense, cover their pride, or screen their villany or lewdness, will justify the total denial of any operation of the Spirit on the hearts of the faithful: then surely we must also allow that the execrable blasphemies uttered against God's most holy word, by those who pique themselves on being eminently rational, would vindicate the suppression of the exercise of the rational faculty; or at least would afford ground to represent it as mischievous in itself, and ever to be suspected. But does not every intelligent person in this case distinguish the use from the abuse of reason? Surely then, reason, candour, and the authority of the Almighty, require you to judge in the same way concerning the work of the Spirit; and not to condemn the genuine offspring of the Holy Ghost, by confounding it with the base counterfeit that may in some points slightly resemble it. And whoever refuses diligently to examine by Scripture marks and evidences, before he determines what is the work of the

Spirit, it is plain that the corruption of his heart has filled him with enmity to the doctrine of the Spirit's influence; and therefore, with criminal rashness, he confounds things which are essentially different; the spirit of delusion with the Spirit of truth.

The other argument urged by many with an air of confidence against the influence of the Holy Ghost on the heart, is as frivolous; namely, *their ignorance of any such operation upon their own minds.* "We expe- "rience," exclaim the careless and the proud, the gay and the voluptuous, "nothing of this kind; therefore "argue as you please concerning it, we cannot be- "lieve it to be any thing more than the creature of "imagination." But what palpable absurdity is this? In every other instance you would condemn it as weak reasoning. Were a man to tell you that he would never believe that there is in another any excellency superior to what he himself possesses, because he does not experience it, would you not think his stupidity too great to deserve an answer?—We do not esteem brutes capable of judging of the properties of man; nor one man, in some instances more capable of judging of the perfections of another. Such as have pursued with success philosophical inquiries, are conscious of pleasures in them, to which others are absolute strangers. Now, should a clown, in the grossness of his ignorance and the narrowness of his understanding, scoff at the mention of such pleasures, and be confident there was no reality in them, surely it would be accounted a piece of folly too gross to need a formal confutation. But the difference between the spiritual man, and the man who apprehends no more than what his own reason can teach him, is much greater than

what subsists between the most illiterate peasant, and the most renowned philosopher. The difference between those that are born after the Spirit, and those that are born only after the flesh, is described in Scripture by these strong terms: *a passing from death to life; out of darkness into marvellous light;* it implies the exercise of the faculties and affections of the mind with esteem, frequency, and delight, on what before was neglected, despised, abhorred. For men therefore to say, We will not admit there is now any operation of the Holy Ghost on the soul, because we feel not his influence on our own, is to make their knowledge the measure of all reality; the folly and fallacy of which is obvious. They may know indeed how the case is with themselves: that there is no such thing as the work of the Holy Ghost on their hearts; no enlightening of their understanding; no change in their own affections, no desire of nearer and still nearer approach to God, no thirsting after his presence, no heavenly joy and consolation in Christ Jesus. *This* all men, who are destitute of repentance and faith in Jesus, may with the greatest truth affirm of themselves, for the Scripture declares it of them. But positively and confidently to assert that this must be the case with all others likewise, is to reject the essential difference on earth between the heirs of salvation and the children of the wicked one. It is sacrilegiously to deny the work of the Spirit, and the life maintained by him; though in Scripture there is a clear, full, and distinct account of this work, and of the life produced in the soul by him; of its nature and operations; its pains and enjoyments; its declensions and revivals.

To deny therefore the reality of these things, is to lie against the Holy Ghost, and to prove manifestly that you have no share in him. It is to lie against him; because, if there be no work and operation of the Holy Ghost, then the Scriptures, which holy men of old wrote through his inspiration, and which give a particular account of his continual presence and influence with the church, are no better than a fabulous tale. And it proves that you have no share in him, since you could not speak with malicious words against that divine Agent who impresses the truth of God on the heart; unless you were yourself, alas! *earthly, sensual, having not the Spirit.**

* See Prayer the *Thirteenth.*

SUNDAY XVIII. CHAPTER XVIII.

On the Nature of true Repentance.

IT is a truth fully revealed in Scripture, that without repentance no one can enter into life. But too often it happens that those who are convinced of this, deceive themselves by calling something by the name of repentance, which bears only a superficial worthless resemblance to it: and then flatter themselves with the vain imagination that this base counterfeit will be entitled to the blessings promised to the divine original.

To compare therefore, and distinguish the true re-

pentance from the false; to shew why every one, ere he can be saved, must experience the change it implies, and to discover the way to attain it, is a point of great importance. It will tend, through the blessing of God, to discover prevailing errors which lie at the root of all careless and profane living, and to awaken every reader to self-examination on this important point.

First, then, let it be observed, that false repentance *flows only from a sense of danger, and a fear of impending wrath.* When the conscience of a sinner is alarmed with a sense of his dreadful guilt and danger, it must of necessity loudly remonstrate against those sins which threaten him with eternal destruction: hence those alarms and terrors which frequently terrify men under apprehensions of death. At such times, their sins, some grosser enormities especially, confront them,—and all their aggravations are remembered with bitterness; conscience draws up the indictment, and importunately urges the charge against them; the law passes the sentence, and condemns them without mercy. And what have they now in prospect but a fearful looking-for of fiery indignation to consume them? Now with distress they cry out and howl upon their beds for the greatness of their sin! With amazement they expect the dreadful issue of their sinful practices. How ready are they now to make resolutions of beginning a humble, watchful, holy life! In this their terror, conscience, like a flaming sword, restrains them from their former course of impiety and sensuality.

But what is this repentance more than the fear of the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that never

shall be quenched. Let but conscience be pacified, and the tempest of the troubled mind subside, and this false penitent will return with the dog to his vomit again, till some new alarm revive his convictions of sin and danger, and with them the same process of repentance. Thus too many will sin and repent, and repent and sin all their lives.

In some instances, indeed, distress of conscience makes a deeper impression, and fixes such an abiding dread of particular gross sins, that there appears a visible reformation. Yet in this case, the sinner's lusts may only be restrained for a time by his fears; as the current of a river is impeded by some casual obstruction; which being removed, the stream returns to its former channel, with renewed force. It is true, this terror is often a preparative to true repentance; but if it proceed no farther, it is still a fallacious sign of safety.

Here however it is necessary to observe, that though there may be much terror and external reformation without true repentance, yet it is somewhat to be thus far affected. The greater part of true penitents have been at first under similar distress, and perhaps began out of mere selfishness to flee from the wrath to come. Instead therefore of construing what is said against false repentance, as if all were lost because your repentance is not yet of the right kind; let it work more reasonably, and excite you to prayer, that those terrors and checks which are in themselves no certain proofs of the sincerity of your repentance, may finally issue in genuine contrition.

False repentance then flows *merely* from a sense of danger, and a fear of impending wrath. The charac-

ter of true repentance is quite opposite. Here *sin itself* becomes the greatest burden and object of aversion; sorrow springs from an affecting humbling sense of the dishonour and injury the penitent feels he has done unto God; not only from a selfish concern for his own safety, but from that regard to God, to which he was before a stranger; from a conviction that his whole deportment and the ruling tempers of his heart have been evil and desperately wicked. The language of a true Scripture penitent is such as this: *I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me: mine iniquities are gone over my head as an heavy burden; they are too heavy for me. Deliver me from all my transgressions, let not my sins have dominion over me. Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me. O Lord, make haste to help me.* The true penitent mourns on account of all his lusts, and hates them all; he is not willing that any should be spared, though they were dear as a right hand, or a right eye.

How great and apparent the difference between being struck with fear, restrained by terror, or driven from a course of sinning by the lashes of an awakened conscience,—Between this, I say, and loathing ourselves in our own sight for all our iniquities, vehemently desiring grace and strength to conquer and mortify corruption, and to be delivered from the tyrannous rule of sin! The former is merely the sordid fruit of self-love, which compels the soul to flee from

danger; the latter, the exercise of a vital principle, which separates the soul from sin, and engages the whole man in a persevering opposition to it.

Secondly, False repentance dishonours God, *by refusing*, under all its distracting fears, *to trust to his mercy*. It is full of unbelief, though the Gospel has provided a glorious relief for every guilty, ruined sinner, and opened a blessed door of hope even for those whose sins are red as scarlet; though pardon and salvation are freely offered to every one that is weary and heavy laden with the guilt and defilement of sin; though the blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse from all sins, however circumstanced, however aggravated they may be: the false penitent, alas! sees no safety in this refuge. The law of God challenges his obedience, and condemns his disobedience; conscience concurs both with the precept and sentence of the law. To pacify conscience, to satisfy God's justice, and to lay a foundation of future hope, he has recourse to resolutions, to promises, to attempts of new and better obedience, to penances, and to a variety of self-righteous schemes. The defect of his endeavours and attainments creates new terrors; these terrors excite new endeavours; and thus the false penitent goes on, notwithstanding the greatness of his sorrow and the pain of his conviction, seeking righteousness by his own works, and afraid to trust in the mercy of God through the blood of his Son. He may, it is true, have some sort of feeble regard to Christ, so as to use his name in his prayers for pardon, though he dare not depend upon the merits of his blood, and upon the love of God manifested in him, for the remission of his sins. Yet even this regard itself is built upon the

secret hope that his reformation and performances will contribute to purchase the favour of God, which he cannot confide in as freely promised, for Christ's sake, to every humbled sinner. It is in effect a disparagement of the Redeemer, as if he knew not how to have compassion on him till he was recommended by some attainments in holiness.

Now take a view of true repentance, and you will find the character of it directly opposite to that mentioned above. The true penitent approaches God with a deep impression of his guilt, and of his just desert of eternal rejection: but then he comes before a mercy-seat, though he acknowledge that if God should mark iniquity, he could not stand before him; he remembers, *that with God there is forgiveness that he may be feared;* and that *with him there is plenteous redemption.* —He looks to the blood of Christ as alone efficacious to cleanse his soul, and take away the curse due to his numerous and aggravated sins; and from this, he takes encouragement to mourn before God, expressing himself in the Psalmist's language; *Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin; purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.* This is the prayer which both encourages his cries for mercy, and embitters to him all his sins; this it is which makes him loathe them all, and long for deliverance from them.

"Is God infinitely merciful and ready to forgive," saith the true penitent, "and have I been so basely "ungrateful as to sin against such astonishing good-"ness, to affront and abuse such mercy and love? Is "sin so hateful to God that he punished it even in

"the person of his dear Son, when he made him an "atonement for sin? How vile and abominable then "must I appear in the eyes of his holiness and jus- "tice, who am nothing but defilement and guilt! "Has the blessed Saviour suffered the Father's wrath "for my sins? Have *they* nailed him to the cross, "and doomed him to the agonies of an accursed "death; and shall I *yet* be reconciled to my lusts? "Have I dishonoured God so much already, loaded "his dear Son with so many horrible indignities, and "brought such a weight of guilt upon myself! and is "it not now high time to divorce my most beloved "lusts, those great enemies to God and my own "soul?"

Here you must perceive the great difference and even contrariety, between a guilty fleeing from God, like that of Adam after his fall; and an humbling self-condemning approach to God's pardoning mercy, like the prodigal's, when returning to his much injured father:—between slavish and proud endeavours to atone for your sins, and make your peace with God by your own righteousness; and repairing only to the blood of Christ to cleanse you from all sin;—between mourning for your guilt and danger; and mourning for your sins as the basest injury to God and Christ, to mercy and love manifested in the most endearing manner: in a word, between attempting a new life by the strength of your own resolutions and endeavours; and looking only to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for grace and strength, as well as for pardon, and freedom from condemnation.

Thirdly; In false repentance there still remains an *aversion to God and his holy law;* but in true repen-

tance there is a love for both. The distress and terror which awakened sinners feel, arise from dreadful apprehensions of God and his justice: they know that they have greatly provoked him, they are afraid of his wrath, and therefore want some covert: they might before, perhaps, have had some pleasing apprehensions of God, while they considered him as altogether mercy, and so long as they could hope for pardon, and yet live in their sins; but now they have some idea of his holiness and justice, he appears an infinite enemy. They are consulting therefore some way to be at peace with him, because they are afraid that the controversy will issue in their destruction. Upon this account they resolve on new obedience, from the same motives that influence slaves to obey their tyrannical masters, though the rule of their obedience be directly contrary to the inclinations of their minds. Were the penalty of the law taken away, their aversion to it would quickly appear. They would soon again embrace their beloved lusts with the same pleasure and delight as formerly. Is not the truth of this assertion frequently, alas! exemplified in those who wear off their convictions and reformations together, and, notwithstanding their appearances of religion, discover the alienation of their hearts from God and his law, and shew themselves (as the apostle expresses it) *enemies in their minds by their wicked works.*

The true penitent, on the contrary, sees an admirable beauty and excellency in a life of holiness, and therefore strives for higher attainments in it. He is sensible how much he has transgressed the law of God, and how very far he is departed from the purity and

holiness of the divine nature; this is the burden of his soul; hence it is that he walks in heaviness: he mourns, not because the law is so strict, or the penalty so severe, for he esteems the *law to be holy,* and *the commandment holy, just, and good;* but he mourns, that though the *law is spiritual, he is carnal, sold under sin;* he mourns that his nature is so contrary to God, that his practice has been so opposite to his will, and that he makes no better progress in mortifying the deeds of the flesh, and in regulating his affections by the word of God. The true penitent is breathing with the same earnestness after sanctification, as after deliverance from the wrath revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness; he does not want to have the law bend to his corruptions, but to have his heart and life fully subjected to the law of God: there is nothing he so much desires, besides an interest in Christ and the favour of God, as a freedom from sin, a proficiency in faith and holiness, a life of communion and fellowship with God. "What a corrupted "evil heart, (he says) have I: so estranged from the "holy nature of God and his righteous law! what a "most guilty wretch have I been, who have walked "so contrary to the glorious God, who have trampled "upon his excellent perfections, and have made so "near an approach to the practice and spirit of a de-"vil! Create a clean heart, O God! and renew a "right spirit within me; purify this sink of pollution, "and sanctify these depraved affections of my soul. "O that my ways were made so direct, that I might "keep thy statutes! O let me not wander from thy "commandments, but deal bountifully with thy ser-"vant, that I may live and keep thy word."

Such as these, are the desires of every true penitent; and from hence you may plainly discover the great difference between him and a false one. The one looks upon God with dread, terror, and aversion; the other mourns his distance from him, and earnestly desires to be transformed into his likeness: the one still loves his sins in his heart, though he mourns there is a law to punish them; the other hates all his sins without reserve, and is weary under the burden of them, *because* they are contrary to God, and his holy law: the obedience of the one is by mere constraint; the imperfections of the other are matter of continual humiliation, that makes him aspire after greater degrees of grace and holiness: the one can find no inward and abiding complacency in the service of God; the other accounts it his happiness, and thinks no joy equal to that of pure obedience. *

* See Prayer the *Fourteenth*.

SUNDAY XIX. CHAPTER XIX.

The Nature of true Repentance further explained.

TRUE repentance being the foundation of all Christian piety, it is a matter of great importance that we should be thoroughly instructed in its nature. We have endeavoured therefore to make you fully acquainted with it by contrasting it to that false repentance which is principally liable to be confound-

ed with it. *False* repentance, we have observed, is excited only by terror; *true*, is the effect of a just sense of the evil of sin, and a love to the blessed God. *False* repentance is full of unbelief; *true* is animated with confidence by a Saviour's promises, and inspired with gratitude to him. *False* repentance is consistent with an aversion to God and his law, while the *true* sees an infinite beauty in holiness, and loves the commandments of God. Thus in their origin and nature they differ essentially from each other, nor shall we perceive a difference less striking if we attend to the progress and effects of each.

1. False repentance *subsides with the alarming convictions which produced it:* but true repentance is permanent. We have had many sad instances of persons who appear for a season under the greatest remorse for their sins; yet all these impressions are soon effaced, and they return to the same course of impiety or sensuality, which, they confess, produced so much distress and terror. They declare to the world, that their good resolutions were but as a morning cloud, or as an early dew. Besides these, there are many of another character, who quiet their consciences and speak peace to their souls, from their having been in distress and terror for their sins, from their discontinuance of some grosser immoralities, and from a formal course of duty. They have repented, they think, and therefore, conclude themselves at peace with God, and seem to have no great care and concern either about their former impieties, or their daily transgressions. They conclude themselves in a converted state, and are therefore lukewarm and secure. Many of these may think, and perhaps speak loudly of, a

spiritual life, and be even elated with joyful apprehensions of their safe state; whilst, alas! they have no practical conviction of sin, no mourning after pardon, no humiliation under remaining and manifold corruptions, imperfect duties, and renewed provocations against God. There are many also, it might still farther be added, who, while under the stings of an awakened conscience, will be driven to maintain a diligent watch over their hearts and lives, to be afraid of every sin, to be careful to attend to every known duty, and even to be serious and earnest in the performance of it. Now by this their supposed progress in religion, they gradually escape from the terrors of the law, and then, their watchfulness and tenderness of conscience are forgotten. They attend their duties in a careless manner, with a trifling remiss frame of soul, whilst the all-important realities of an eternal world are but little in their minds, and all their religion is reduced to a mere cold formality. They still maintain the form, but are unconcerned about the power, of godliness. In some such manner false repentance leaves the soul destitute of that entire change and renovation, without which no man shall see the Lord.

On the other hand, true repentance is a *lasting* principle of humble self-abasing mourning for sin, and abhorrence of all remaining corruption. A true penitent does not forget his past sins, and grow unconcerned about them as soon as he obtains peace in his conscience, and a comfortable hope that he is reconciled to God; on the contrary, the clearer the evidence he obtains of the divine favour, the more does he loathe, abhor, and condemn himself for his sins;

the more aggravated and enormous do they appear to him. He not only continues to abhor himself on account of his past guilt and defilement, but he finds daily cause to renew his repentance before God: he observes so much deadness, formality, and hypocrisy, mixing themselves with his holy duties; such frequent revolts of a carnal, worldly, unbelieving spirit; so much difficulty in obtaining a perfect mastery over the sin which easily besets him, that he cannot *but groan, being burdened!* Repentance therefore is his daily continued exercise, till mortality be swallowed up of life; he will not cease to repent till he cease to carry about with him so many imperfections and failings; and *that* will not be till he departs from this fallen world. "Have I hope (says he) that God has par-
" doned my sins? What an instance of mercy is this!
" How adorable is that marvellous grace which has
" plucked such a brand out of the fire! And am I
" still so cold, so formal and lifeless, doing so little
" for him who has done so much for me! Ah, vile
" sinful heart! Ah, base ingratitude to such amazing
" goodness! O that I could obtain more victory over
" my corruptions; that I could render more thankful-
" ness for such mercies as I have received; and possess
" a frame of mind more spiritual and heavenly! How
" long have I been mourning over my infirmities, and
" must I *yet* have cause to mourn over the same de-
" fects? How often designing, and aspiring after a
" closer communion with God; but what a poor pro-
" gress do I yet make, save in desires and endeavours!
" How would the iniquities of my best duties separate
" betwixt God and my soul for ever, had I not the Re-
" deemer's merits to plead! What need have I every

"day to have this polluted soul washed in the blood "of Christ, and to repair to the glorious Advocate "with the Father, for the benefit of his intercession? "Not a step can I take in my spiritual progress, with- "out fresh supplies from the Fountain of grace and "strength; and yet how often am I provoking him "to withdraw his influences, in whom is all my hope "and confidence! O wretched man that I am, who "shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Thus, the true penitent, in his highest attainments of holiness, comfort, and joy, will find cause to be deeply humble before God, and to make earnest application for fresh pardon, and new supplies of strengthening and quickening grace. The difference therefore betwixt these two sorts of penitents is very apparent: it is as great as that between the running of water in the paths after a violent shower, and the streams which flow from a living fountain. A false repentance has grief of mind and humiliation only for *great* and *glaring* offences; or till it suppose pardon for them obtained. True repentance is a continued war against all the defilements of sin, till death sound the retreat.

Again; *False* repentance does at most produce *only a partial reformation;* but *true repentance is a total change of heart,* and universal turning from sin to God. As some particular or more gross iniquity generally excites that distress and terror which is the life of false repentance, so a reformation with respect to those sins, too frequently wears off the impression, and gives rest to the troubled conscience without any farther change. Or at best, there will be some darling lust retained, some right hand or right eye spar-

ed. If the false penitent be afraid of sins of commission, he will still live in the omission or careless performance of known duty, and feel no guilt. Or if he be very zealous for the duties respecting the immediate worship of God, he will live in strife, injustice, and uncharitableness towards men. If he shew some activity in contending earnestly for the truth of the Gospel, he will still have his heart and affections rivetted to the world, and pursue it as the object of his chief desire and delight. If he should make conscience of opposing all open actual sins, yet he little regards the sins of his heart; silent envy, secret pride, self-preference, unbelief, or some such heart-defiling sins. To finish his character; whatever progress he may seem to make in religion, his *heart* is still estranged from the power of godliness, and like the Laodiceans, he is neither hot nor cold.

If we proceed to take a view of the character of a true penitent, it is directly contrary to this. He finds indeed (as has been observed) continual occasion to lament the great imperfections of his heart and life, and accordingly seeks renewed pardon in the blood of Christ. But though he has not already attained, neither is already perfect, yet he is pressing towards perfection. He is watching and striving against all his corruptions, and labouring after farther conformity to God in all holy conversation and godliness. He does not renounce one lust and retain another; or satisfy himself with devotional duties, while he undervalues scrupulous honesty and unfeigned benevolence: he cannot rest till this is his rejoicing, even the *testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has*

his conversation in the world. All the workings of his mind, as well as his external conduct, fall under his cognizance and inspection, and his daily exercise and desire are, to approve himself unto him who knows his thoughts afar off. His reformation extends not only to the devotion of the church, but to that of his family and closet; not only to his conversation, but to his tempers and affections, and to the duties of every relation he sustains among men. His repentance brings forth its *meet fruits,* heavenly-mindedness, humility, meekness, charity, patience, forgiveness of injuries, self-denial; and is accompanied with all other graces of the blessed Spirit.

"It is the desire of my soul (saith the true penitent) to refrain my feet from every evil way, and "*walk within my house with a perfect heart.* I know I "have to do with a God *that trieth the heart,* and *hath* "*pleasure in uprightness;* I would therefore *set the* "*Lord always* before me. I know that *my heart is de-* "*ceitful above all things and desperately wicked,* for "which I am humbled in mine own eyes; but yet *my* "*desire is before the Lord, and my groaning is not hid* "*from him.* I can truly say, that *I hate vain thoughts,* "*but God's law do I love. O that God would give me* "*understanding that I may keep his law,* and *observe it* "*with my whole heart.* I would serve God without "any reserve, for I *esteem his precepts concerning all* "*things to be right,* and *I have inclined my heart to* "*keep his statutes always even unto the end.*"

Once more, False repentance basely *yields to the fear of man;* while true repentance is *full of boldness and courage for God.* Thousands, in obedience to the

calls and warnings they have received, begin seemingly to repent; but, loving the praise of men, and not being able to endure the contempt and ridicule of the hypocritical and profane, for their attachment to God; turn aside from the holy commandment. Their own family, the persons with whom they are connected, or on whom they depend, must at all hazards be respected and pleased. No sinful ways therefore must be condemned with abhorrence, that may risk the favour of those who can do them so much service or injury in the world.

The true penitent, on the contrary, will carefully avoid every temptation to past offences, and every occasion that might endanger a relapse. He will not dissemble; he will not conform so far to the world as to be found where temptation appears in its most inviting forms; and where the studied end of the assembly or amusement is such as diverts the thoughts from God and eternity. In like manner, for conscience' sake he will forego temporal advantages, and break through the ties even of sweetest friendship and of nearest kindred, rather than be drawn back by either, into his former neglect and contempt of duty. He will walk circumspectly with a godly jealousy over all things and persons connected with him, lest any of them should prove a snare or a hinderance to him in the way to eternal life, now opened before his eyes. It is his stedfast purpose, lose or suffer what he may, to wage eternal war with the prevailing errors and favourite sins that abound in the world, and to say to all the insinuating advocates for them; *Depart from me, ye wicked, I will keep the commandments of my God.*

In short, in these important particulars lies the difference between false and true repentance. The former is only an external reformation, destitute of all the graces of the blessed Spirit: the latter, a change of the heart, will, and affections, as well as of the outward conversation; a change which is attended with all the fruits and graces of the Spirit of God. False repentance aims at just so much religion as will keep the mind easy, and calm the awakened conscience: true repentance aims ever to walk before God in an humble, watchful, believing frame of soul. The former will obey the law and command of God just as far as the world will permit, without persecution or reproach: the latter with an invincible regard for the glory of God, is content to go through evil report and good report, content with the approbation of God, let men think or say what they please.*

* See Prayer the *Fourteenth*.

SUNDAY XX. CHAPTER XX.

The universal Obligation of Repentance, and Directions to attain it.

IF the word of God were received with that degree of deference which is so justly due to it, there would be no necessity for stating more than the sim-

ple declaration of Scripture which requires *all* men to repent, in order to shew the universal obligation of true repentance. But, alas! it is too common to form our judgment of duty from the general practice of a careless world, or from hasty and erroneous conceptions of the nature of virtue, rather than from the oracles of truth. In direct contradiction to the Scripture declarations, it has been a prevailing opinion, that those alone need repentance, whose abominations every eye can see; whose lewdness or drunkenness, dishonesty or profaneness, are open and excessive. Ignorant of the natural depravity, and apostasy of the whole human race from God, or proudly prejudiced against this doctrine, they of course suppose much evil must actually be practised, before a *total* change of heart and life can become absolutely necessary.

To speak more particularly; a *young* gentleman, who has been sober and dutiful to his parents, well esteemed abroad, and commended at home, kept by the affluence of his station from the temptation of doing what is accounted base before men, is apt so to overrate his own sober conduct, as to suppose he has no occasion for any godly sorrow or trouble of mind in the view of his own transgressions. He is apt to conclude that you degrade his character by calling him to the exercise of serious repentance.

In the same manner, a *young* lady, born to inherit wealth, educated to be affable and polite, to love peace and harmony, cannot be guilty of any thing the world calls sinful without doing violence to all the restraints of modesty, decency, and character. Of consequence, self-pleasing thoughts of her own innocency and goodness hold firm possession of her mind.

She cannot believe that it is necessary for a person of her good character to feel shame and sorrow for sin, and a broken contrite heart, or to seek after any such change as Scriptural repentance means.

But notwithstanding the attempts of many celebrated and learned advocates for the innocency of such amiable characters, the Scripture, which must prevail at last, and be found the only true standard of what is excellent,—the Scripture has concluded *all under sin.* It is therefore a most certain truth, that sober, decent, and dutiful as you may be in the eyes of parents, relations, or friends; yet, if you are ignorant of any divine change, and remain a stranger to that internal renovation which constitutes Scripture repentance, you are far from being in a state of innocency or safety: a charge of great guilt remains in full force against you, a charge which makes repentance as absolutely needful for you, as if your iniquities were of a more glaring kind. This charge shall now be substantiated.

Let it then be supposed, that you are a young person, decent, and in the eyes of the world, amiable in your whole deportment: let it be supposed that not a relation nor a friend see any thing in you to be amended; yet consider, O much-admired youth, how your heart is affected towards Him who made, preserves, and blesses you; from whose bounty you have received all those endowments, the cultivation of which makes you the agreeable person you are. Do you fear and do you love him? Do you make conscience of employing your time, your talents, your influence, as he has commanded you to do? Are

you afraid of conformity to the manners and tempers of the world, and jealous of friendship with it as enmity against God? Do you hear his word with reverence, and in the solemn time of prayer labour to check every impertinent vain thought? Are you restrained in your conversation by his law, from giving into that fashionable way of discourse, which at once indulges and strengthens pride, sensuality, or covetousness? Are you desirous to live in subjection to God, and careful to inform yourself what he would have you to do? Is your dependence continually on the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and strength?

If conscience witnesses against you that you are a stranger to such intentions and tempers (and thus it does witness, unless you have truly repented), then, however admired, however in reality more serious and sober than those of your early age, certainly your whole life has been sin and provocation, perpetually repeated: because it has been entirely under the guidance of a depraved mind. Your study and aim have been above every thing to please yourself, and to please men, while the holy will of God and his honour have scarce had any place in your thoughts. In the midst of all the decent regard you have been paying to every one about you, God has cause to complain that he only has been treated by you with dissimulation and neglect, if not with scorn. But now, if the fact really be so, that you have dissembled with God, neglected and despised him; is it not a vain plea against the necessity of repentance, to say that you are innocent of the common vices of youth, and have an unblemished character? For is not this charge of sinfulness in your behaviour towards the Most High

God, sufficiently comprehensive both in the eye of reason and Scripture to prove the necessity of your feeling deep humiliation and self-abhorrence? Does it not make an entire renovation of mind absolutely needful? or can any one be absurd enough to suppose that the guilt of withholding all esteem, desire, and affection from God, is in a manner cancelled by an amiable deportment to brothers or sisters, relations or friends? If a sense of your obligations to God as your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, have no share in directing your pursuits and modelling your tempers, the difference with respect to God must be of very little account, whether your reigning self-love be gratified in a way more reputable among men, rather than in one which would expose you as well to shame here, as to the wrath of God hereafter. In one case as well as the other, there is no sense of God, no practice of your duty towards him; and therefore, unless true repentance take place, you still remain an apostate creature, involved in all the capital guilt and misery of the fall: you remain a creature setting up your own will above the law of God, consequently if you die under the power of such a spirit, you must perish for ever.

Equally vain and frivolous is it (though so deplorably frequent) for men to confide in the fidelity and justice with which they trade, or in the general benevolence of their character, as if *these* were to supersede in their case the necessity of repentance. For you may detest every species of dishonesty and villany, of cruel and oppressive deportment, while pride and self-sufficiency reign undisturbed in your soul;

while every temper by which due homage is paid to God, is a stranger to your heart. Honesty and benevolence, upon whatever principle they are exercised, are sure to be applauded by selfish men, yet must these dispositions be the offspring of an humble heart, before they can find acceptance with God. *Though I give all my goods to the poor,* unless this love of my neighbour spring from love to God (which before true repentance can have no place in my heart) *it profiteth me nothing;* it will not be found a virtue, when *weighed in the balance of the sanctuary.* So far indeed is the practice of social duties from rendering godly sorrow, humiliation for sin, and absolute dependence upon the blood of Christ unnecessary, that the haughty profane imagination of its doing so, as much needs mercy to pardon it, as the grossest act of injustice towards men; since it proves the whole head and heart, which could give place to such a thought, utterly depraved.

You have now been instructed in the nature of true repentance, and the indispensible necessity there is that every fallen creature should experience that entire change of judgment, practice, and affections, which true repentance implies: I would flatter myself therefore that your conscience is now in some degree awakened; I would flatter myself that you have an earnest desire to be informed *what course you must take to be brought into a state of true repentance;* if this be your desire, instead of multiplying directions, it will suffice to press you to observe the few following.

First, Frequently *read the Scripture* with seriousness and unfeigned submission to it, as the method prescribed by God himself for your recovery; and let

your thoughts dwell on what immediately respects your own case, that is, the nature and effects of true repentance. The fifty-first Psalm will unfold to you the heart of the penitent contrite David; and the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, describes the affecting return of a sinner in your own condition to his much injured father. The same inward and entire change of heart is described at large in the fifth chapter of the Ephesians, and in the sixth also to the 17th verse. Upon these and similar portions of Scripture you must carefully meditate. While thus employed, you are in the way to receive some illuminating communications, to find desires after God spring up in your soul; to feel the exercise of those very dispositions towards him, which, as you have learned from his own word, denote true repentance.

Secondly, Consider the *corruption of your nature,* and the many sins you have actually committed. Only commune with your own heart, and you will immediately find your inclinations strongly bent to many things, which, your conscience tells you, ought not to be done; and that you have a great aversion from other things, which are in themselves excellent, and ought to be done by you; you will observe a miserable confusion and inconsistency in your thoughts, a perverseness in your will, and a prevailing sensuality in your affections.

The fruit of this universal depravity, you must also carefully observe, as it has appeared in the multitude of your transgressions. Think of the several places you have lived in, and what in each of these your sins have been: take an account of your offences against those, with whom you have dealt in a way of trade,

conversed with intimacy and friendship, or those on whom you should have had compassion, and exercised the most tender love: mark those sins which have arisen from your outward circumstances; and above all, reflect deeply on what is, strictly speaking, *your own* iniquity; the sin to which you are most enslaved, whether anger, envy, impurity, pride and self-conceit, lying, the love of money or of esteem: take notice in how many instances it has broken out, so as to leave uneasy impressions on your mind, and yet has been again and again repeated: after this, think how often you have stifled convictions; how often turned away from the offers of grace and calls to repentance; think of your sins against a Redeemer; reflect how long you have willingly lived in ignorance of his undertaking, have disregarded his obedience, though the righteousness of God, and his sacrifice, though that of the Son of God: think of the despite you have done against the Holy Spirit, resisting his motions, and excusing yourself from a compliance with his secret suggestions. And then at the end of all, reckon up the several aggravations of your sin, the judgments and afflictions, the mercies and deliverances, the counsels and reproofs, the light and knowledge, the vows and promises against which you have sinned.

Thirdly, You must pray to the God of all grace, to *give you repentance unto life.* Naturally you suppose you have it in your own power to repent just when you please; at least you suppose the alarming circumstances of sickness and approaching death will of themselves induce you to repent. But this is a vain and proud opinion, which experience daily proclaims to be without foundation, and which the Bible exposes

as false to every attentive reader, by calling repentance *the gift of God.* For to produce in the heart an abiding sense and detestation of our own vileness, with confidence in the pardoning mercy of God through Christ, with a zeal for his glory expressing itself in newness of life, (which alone is what the Bible means by repentance) to produce a change of this nature belongeth only to the effectual working of God's holy Spirit. Self-love and pride with all their force withstand the charge of sinfulness; every natural inclination of the soul rises up in arms, and opposes with all its might true humiliation. At the same time it is impossible, without divine light and super-natural teaching, to discover any such loveliness in a just and sin-hating God, or in a faithful obedience to his law, as to create abhorrence of sinful lusts, too long cherished and indulged as the sources of gratification and pleasure.—Therefore it is from the grace of God alone, the fountain of every good and perfect gift, that you must receive repentance unto life. It is your part, as a reasonable and immortal creature, to hear the command of God to repent; and, as a helpless sinner, insufficient to every good work, to pray for his almighty Spirit, that you may be obedient to it. It is your part meekly to confess your own inability to glorify God by true repentance, and to beg of him, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, that you may be turned to him, seeing and bewailing the sin of your nature as well as of your practice, of your heart as well as of your life, and desiring grace to approve yourself to God in newness of spirit a sincere penitent.*

* See Prayer the *Fourteenth.*

SUNDAY XXI. CHAPTER XXI.

The Dispositions of a Christian towards God.

AS God is altogether lovely in himself, and in his benefits towards us inexpressibly great, so nothing can be more evident than that he ought to reign in our affections without a rival. But from yielding this rightful worship to his Creator, man is naturally averse: and it is owing only to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, enforced by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Christian renounces his natural disaffection to his Creator, and glorifies him as God.

The grace of God, saith the Scripture, *which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men;* not merely enjoining them by the force of a command, but *teaching them,* that is, by the communication of divine knowledge, *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts;* to loathe the very thought of insulting any more their adorable Benefactor by rebellion; or of dishonouring him by neglect. The doctrines of grace, like an affectionate tutor, form men to obedience; and when clearly manifested to the understanding and cordially embraced, they make every duty we owe to our Creator appear both rational and easy. They give us a heart, a hand, and sufficient ability to exercise ourselves unto universal godliness.

Having therefore already explained and established those doctrines of grace, which constitute the divine knowledge peculiar and essential to a Christian, I now proceed to *a particular delineation of that most excellent*

practice by which he differs from the enslaved multitude of unbelieving sinners; that practice which he esteems his bounden duty, and by which he shews forth the praises of his God and Saviour, who hath called him out of darkness into his marvellous light.

We begin with those various dispositions towards the ever-blessed God, of which the habitual exercise is to be found in the heart of every real Christian.

1. The first disposition of this kind is *fear*. This is one of those great springs of action by which rational creatures are influenced. It is of the highest importance therefore to have this affection exercised upon some just object, so that the mind may, on the one hand, be armed against vain terrors, and, on the other, be duly impressed by those things which ought to be dreaded. In this excellent manner the affection of fear is regulated in the Christian's breast. Temporal evils of every kind he discerns to be nothing more than instruments in the hand of God, wholly subserving his pleasure, and unable to affect man's most important interest. Therefore *he sanctifies the Lord God in his heart,* and regards *as his fear and his dread,* him who is too wise to be deceived, too just to be biassed, too mighty to be resisted, and too majestic to be contemplated without reverence and self-abasement. Very different is *his* fear of the Most High from the terror of a *slave,* that uneasy feeling, which causes the object of it to be considered with pain. His is the fear of a rational creature towards its all perfect Creator, of a servant towards a tender master, of a child towards its wise and merciful father; therefore, in the same proportion as he increases in the knowledge of God, he increases also in the fear of him. And so insepara-

ble is such a temper of mind towards God, where his attributes are known, that the bright inhabitants of heaven express themselves as if they could not suppose it possible there should be a reasonable being void of such a disposition; for they say, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou art holy?*

A Christian fears the Lord, so as to stand in awe; he can neither be bribed nor intimidated wilfully to sin against him. But as he is encompassed with infirmities, snares, and temptations, so he finds it necessary at some seasons, to the end of his life, to repel solicitations to evil by reflecting upon the severity of God's vengeance on impenitent sinners, and meditating upon the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. In this fear of the Lord is safety; and the longer he lives under its influence, the more it becomes a generous filial fear.

2. This fear therefore does not hinder, but promote the exercise of another disposition towards God, which is most conspicuous in every real Christian, namely, *a readiness to obey God without reserve.* He beholds his Maker's absolute dominion over him founded in his very being. Every faculty of his soul, and every member of his body, is a witness of his Maker's righteous claim to his life and to his labours; when he requires them to be employed in his service, he does but appoint the use of what is his own absolute property. Ever conscious of this, he resolutely regards the authority of God in a world which despises

it: he uniformly persists in obedience to him; though his natural corruptions, his worldly interest, and the prevailing customs of the world should oppose it. In his judgment, the command of God alone constitutes a practice reasonable and necessary. He wants no higher authority to confirm it; nor can any objections from selfish considerations induce him to evade its force, or prevaricate concerning the obligation of the command. He makes his prayer unto the God of his life, to teach him his statutes; to set his heart at liberty from every evil bias, that he may run the way of his commandments. He says unto God, *I am thine, O! save me, for I have sought thy commandments.* And when, through surprise, he has been drawn aside, shame, sorrow, and indignation succeed his transgression, and he becomes more humble, and more vigilant also, against future temptations.

3. *Gratitude to God* is also a distinguishing part of the christian disposition. Where there is any degree of honesty and generosity of mind, there will necessarily be a desire also of testifying a due sense of favours received; an eagerness to embrace the first opportunity of convincing our Friend and Benefactor, that we feel our obligations. In the case of benefits and favours conferred by man upon man, all acknowledge the duty of this grateful return, and all are ready to brand with ignominy any ungrateful object of generosity, who repays with ill-will or neglect a liberal patron. But, alas! where the obligation is the greatest possible, it is often the least felt, and men scruple not to treat with neglect the supreme Benefactor of the human race. From this detestable crime the real Christian alone stands exempted. He perceives co-

gent and continual reasons for gratitude to God, and is impressed by them. He is deeply sensible of the bounty of his Maker in all the providences relating both to his body and to his soul. Food and raiment, health and strength, he day by day receives as undeserved instances of the loving-kindness of his God; and all these common blessings keep alive a glow of gratitude to God within him. But much more is he excited to thankfulness, upon considering the mercies relating to his eternal interest. He freely acknowledges that God might have justly cut him off while he was living in rebellion against his law; or have left him to continue under that dreadful hardness and blindness of heart, which so long had power over him. Instead of this, he can say, "He hath opened my eyes "and changed my heart; conquered the stubbornness "of my own will, and given me an unfeigned desire "to be conformed to his; made me a member of "Christ; persuaded me by his Spirit of the truth and "absolute necessity of redemption by the Son of God. "I am able, in some degree, to comprehend with all "saints the length and breadth, the height and depth "of the love of Christ. I have a distinct view of that "long train of reproaches, miseries, and torments, "which my salvation cost the Lord of life and glory. "I behold, on the one hand, the fathomless abyss of "woe from which he has rescued me; on the other, "the eternal glory he has promised for my inherit-"ance. Whilst I meditate upon all these things, and "grow more and more intimately acquainted with "their truth, I feel upon my mind an increasing con-"viction that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me. "I am glad to confess that no slave can be so absolutely

" the property of his master, as I am of God; nor " any pensioner, though supported by the most rich " and undeserved bounty, so strongly engaged to gra- " titude, as I am to glorify God both with my body " and with my soul, which are his."

That such is the continual language of a Christian, is evident from the apostle's declaration. When he is shewing the powerful motive which influenced him and all the followers of the Lamb to such eminent zeal in his service, he saith, *The love of Christ constraineth us:* with a pleasing force it bears down all opposition before it, like a mighty torrent, and carries forth our souls in all the effusions of an ingenuous gratitude and thankfulness towards God.

4. Another eminent part of the christian disposition is *affiance in God.* The sin of unbelief, though so often upbraided in Scripture, so dishonourable to God, and so hurtful to ourselves, is still the sin which naturally prevails in all men: and even the Christian is sometimes assaulted and greatly perplexed by it. But though he must confess that, in seasons of great difficulty and danger, he is sometimes afraid; he can say, with equal truth, "Yet will I put my trust in God." He can and does habitually pay to his Maker that most acceptable homage of placing his supreme confidence in him. He, and he alone, can do this; because he not only knows in general that *great is the Lord, and great is his power, yea and his wisdom is infinite;* but he has positive and express promises of grace, mercy, and peace, made to him. For as true repentance, humiliation, and faith in Jesus, have taken possession of his heart, and are habitually exercised by him, so

when he looks into the holy volume, he sees God always described as full of compassion, and abundant in mercy and truth to all repenting and believing sinners. The sight of this constantly invigorates his hope, and increases his confidence.

Besides, he is persuaded that God has given his dear Son, not only as a pledge of his affection towards sinners, but as a sin-offering for them. On the merit of this sacrifice he builds his confidence; he fixes his dependence, where alone it ought to be, on the God of his salvation. "God hath promised," saith he, "to "bring every one to glory, who receives his only-be-"gotten Son, and trusts to his arm. He hath con-"firmed this promise even by an oath; he hath en-"gaged himself by a covenant, ratified by the blood "of his Son. This Son, now as Mediator and High-"priest of his church, appears perpetually before the "throne of glory for all who come to God by him; "he makes effectual intercession for the relief of their "wants, and for the gift of all things which can edify, "comfort, and make them meet for heaven."—Filled with this knowledge, and emboldened by it, he trusts in the Lord, and supports himself upon his God. "Though it would be presumption," he saith, "and "enthusiasm in me to expect to receive from God "what he has no where promised, or what he has pro-"mised, in a way different from what he has pre-"scribed, yet while I am living by faith in the Son of "God, and testifying my unfeigned subjection to him "as my sovereign Lord, I cannot but rejoice in the "thought that God is faithful, who has given us ex-"ceeding great and precious promises, and that he is

" able to do exceedingly above all that I can ask or " think."

And as the Christian first exercises trust in God, encouraged by the revelation he has made of himself in the Gospel, and the promises he has freely given, which none besides himself receive with sincerity; so upon every advance he makes in knowledge and grace, the grounds of his affiance in God grows clearer and stronger. His own happy experience confirms the truth of every promise which at first engaged his dependence. The truth of the word of the Lord is by a vast variety of temptations and enemies tried to the uttermost, that it may be made manifest whether there be any deceit in it; but the experiment, though ever so often repeated, always confirms its value. He beholds his vile affections weakened and mortified, the violence of his enemies restrained, the pleasures and hopes of his spiritual life all exactly corresponding with the account given in the holy word of God. Therefore, from this complete evidence of its truth, he sees that it is good for him to hold fast by God, and to put his trust in the Lord God. And though while he remains in this fallen world, and has the principle of corruption in his heart, he may often find evil propensities and the workings of unbelief; yet he is grieved, ashamed, and confounded at their appearance; he complains of himself unto God; he cries, Lord, increase my faith, deliver me from an evil heart of unbelief. And thus he is enabled with boldness to say, *Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song; he also is become my salvation.*

But what completes the Christian's trust in God even under the most afflictive visitations, is the promise from himself repeated upon various occasions, to this effect, *That all things shall work together for good to them that love God,* Rom. viii. 28. His afflictions therefore he believes are so far from being the scourge of an enemy, or the wound of a cruel one; so far from coming by chance, or upon a design of vengeance, that they are sent with a view to his welfare. It is for our profit that God afflicts, to make us partakers of his holiness. A lively persuasion of this truth prevents the cross from galling, though it does not remove it; it gives to every suffering a kind and friendly appearance. "*Thou, O God, of very faithfulness* "*hast caused me to be troubled; It is the cup which my* "*Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*"

5. It is a distinguishing part of the Christian's temper *in all things to give glory to God.* We give glory to another, when, with high esteem and cordial regard, we declare the excellencies he possesses. The Christian constantly endeavours in this manner to glorify God; to convince all who observe his deportment, that he looks upon the goodness, wisdom, holiness, and sovereign dominion of God in such an amiable light, as cheerfully to employ all his powers and faculties in his service. The false motives, the spurious principles which give birth to so many fair appearances and seemingly good works, have no rule in his heart. He is not restrained from evil, through the fear of shame or of loss; nor is it the love of praise or self-applause which excites him to do well: it is a sense of duty towards his Maker, and a regard to his command. He offers all his social virtues and all his religi-

ous performances unto God, with a predominant desire that his glorious majesty may receive more and more homage and service from himself and all around him. The utility of actions is the only point regarded by the world: they care not from what principle they flow, provided good accrue from them to society. But the Christian knows that God sees not as man sees; that he regards chiefly the disposition of mind from whence our actions arise, and above every thing the respect they have to himself. "God hath commanded me," saith he, "*to do whatever I do, heartily as unto the Lord, and not as unto men.* When I am discharging therefore, and fulfilling the duties of my particular relation in life, as a servant or master, a husband or a son, a tradesman or a magistrate, it is my unfeigned desire that all may perceive me to act conscientiously, because *I esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right,* and am persuaded he has given us a law in these respects, which ought not to be broken. It is this holy aim, I know, can alone consecrate my conduct, make it truly religious, and therefore good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."

6. Inseparable from this design in the Christian to give glory to God, is a studious concern to approve himself sincere before him, *by the purity of his heart.* He has a much nobler and higher aim than the hypocrite or the mere moralist. They both can be satisfied with a freedom from gross offences, and think God's authority sufficiently regarded, if the practice of all outward wickedness be carefully avoided. The work and labour of a Christian, on the contrary, is all with-

in; to prevent the deadly fruit of sin in the branches, by opposing and mortifying it in the root. Though he cannot totally suppress the prurience of evil thoughts, nor prevent the perception of bad impressions from outward objects or inward corruptions, he is alarmed at their intrusion; and with such an emotion as a sovereign feels at the first appearances of rebellion in his kingdom, he cries unto God to rise to his succour, and immediately to expel his enemies. What was at first an involuntary motion in his mind, (sad indication of his evil nature!) he will not suffer to grow more exceeding sinful by cherishing it, or by being at peace with it. For *this* he regards as a plain mark of remaining love for sin, though motives of selfish fear or prudence restrain from the commission of it.

To illustrate this excellent disposition still more distinctly: the Christian, in youth and health, does much more than avoid the brothel or the harlot. He is offended at wanton jesting and filthy talking; he loathes the pictures a corrupt imagination would be painting before him, and resists the impure lusts of his heart. In business and merchandize he does more than renounce, the bag of deceitful weights and the frauds of villany; he renounces the love of money, as one who is indeed a stranger upon earth, and adopted into the family of God. In his behaviour towards his competitors and his enemies, he does not content himself with abstaining from vilifying them by slander, or assaulting them with railing. He condemns and watches against silent envy, secret animosity, and injurious surmises. He appears vindictive and malicious in his own eyes, whenever he detects himself listening

with pleasure to others who are speaking evil of his foes, though the charge be founded on truth. He bewails so plain a proof of the power of irregular self-love and uncharitableness in his heart. To mention no more instances, the Christian is not satisfied in refraining from speaking vainly and proudly of his own accomplishments and advantages, (*this* good sense will check, and good manners teach to be irksome to others), but he maintains an obstinate conflict with self-admiration and self-complacency in his own breast; not desisting till he has put these grand enemies to the glory of God and his grace, to flight, before him. In each of these, and many other instances, he ascribes unto God the honour due unto his name, as the Lord of conscience, as the God *who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, and requireth truth in the inward parts.* He *sets the Lord always before him;* and this is the purport of his constant desire, observed by the omniscient Judge; *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.*

* See Prayer the *Fifteenth.*

SUNDAY XXII. CHAPTER XXII.

The same Subject continued.

TRUE Religion has the honour and glory of God for its object. It brings back man to his allegiance to his Creator; it implants in his mind every holy and generous disposition which tends to glorify God. Thus we have seen that it teaches him to regard God as his *fear* and dread: it requires a cheerful and *universal obedience* to his authority; it inspires him with *gratitude*, animates him with *confidence* towards his Creator, induces him always to aim at the promotion of *his glory*, and leads him to cultivate a *purity of motive* in all his actions. Such are the dispositions, as they respect God, which it is the business of Christianity to form in man. Besides these, there are also others equally excellent, which it is my design at present to set before you; in all which you will discover the same supreme regard to the Creator, and ascription of that honour and glory which so justly belong to him.

7. To proceed therefore with the subject, I observe that *Care to imitate God*, in what he is the proper object of imitation, forms another principal feature in the Christian's disposition. He prays, and labours to have transcribed on his own heart, and to express in his life, the holiness and righteousness of God; his forbearance, mercy, and communicative goodness. And in order to behold these attributes where they shine with the greatest clearness and most transform-

ing efficacy, he contemplates them living and breathing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who in this, as well as in every other sense, *is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.* Upon this all-perfect pattern he stedfastly fixes his eye, as a painter upon a portrait, when copying from an invaluable original. He labours with carefulness and persevering attention to bring himself to a more perfect likeness of his God and Saviour. It is the work of his life to advance in this resemblance; strongly excited to it by the incomparable excellency of the life and character of Jesus. For he beholds all its parts exhibiting to his view a mind unpolluted with any defilement, though inhabiting an earthly tabernacle; a mind adorned with the most lovely tempers; full of all goodness, righteousness, and truth; not judging by the sight of the eye, or charmed with what is most grateful to the voluptuous ear: full of pity towards a wretched sinful world, compassionate to its calamities, unprovoked by its sharpest injuries, and bent upon doing the greatest good, though suffering for it the most cruel treatment.

In such a character there is every thing which demands veneration; and it is not possible constantly to behold, as the real Christian does, this fair beauty of the Lord, without desiring to possess a measure of the same excellencies.

The imitation of the life of Jesus has been enjoined by his own command, to which the Christian pays the most cordial submission. *Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well: for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet: ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an ex-*

ample, that ye should do as I have done to you. John xiii. 13, 14, 15. The force of this injunction makes all contrariety of temper to the mind that was in Jesus Christ appear to the apprehension of the true believer, though found in himself, deformed and criminal. This opens his eyes to see the glaring delusion of being called after the name of Christ without *walking even as he walked;* without *purifying himself even as Christ is pure;* that is, without being endued with such a conformity to the image of the Son of God, as includes the whole circle of those graces which shone in him; and implies an abhorrence, not of one kind of evil only, or of another, but of the whole body of sin. Hence he is in truth an imitator of his Lord, inasmuch as every excellent temper, which without measure dwelt in him, has its real though limited and imperfect influence over all the living members of his church: it is a declaration descriptive of all real Christians; *We all beholding in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of our God.* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

This desire of imitating the life and tempers of Jesus is strengthened exceedingly by the love the Christian bears towards him. We imperceptibly imitate the manners of those we admire; without any studied design on our part, we resemble those who have gained our affections by the greatness of their generosity, and who justify our regard by the degree of their excellence. It is so between man and man, though the richest favours conferred below are small in value, and the most consummate human characters but the shadow of perfection. How strongly then must the

Christian's heart, which is exercised daily in fixing his attention on the riches of the Saviour's love, and the unspeakable kindness expressed in the work of redemption, be excited to imitate so divine a character, the character of him who is his hope, his life, his peace, his God, and his all!

8. The disposition of a Christian stands also distinguished in a very eminent degree from the spirit of the world, *by the affectionate love he bears to God,* and the supreme delight and joy he receives from the knowledge of him. Man, sunk into bodily appetites, lifts not up the heavy eye of his mind to God, nor understands that he can be to the faithful soul a richer fund of present comfort and happiness, than wealth, grandeur, sensual gratification, or books of learning prove to their several devoted admirers. Hence all expressions of fervent love to God, though free from enthusiastic flights, fall under the censure of the world. They assert that they are nothing but fictitious representations, or if any warmth of affection be really felt, it is to be physically accounted for. It is owing to the temperature of the body, to a freer circulation of the blood, or the powers of a warm imagination. The Christian, on the contrary, loves the invisible God with as much sincerity of affection as the covetous love their possessions, or the sensualist the joys of voluptuousness.

He loves God as that blessed Being who is infinitely glorious in himself, in whom all excellencies meet together, and who possesses them all without the possibility of ever suffering them to be impaired or sullied. Enlightened by the Scriptures and the Holy Ghost, he beholds such goodness in God, as disparages whatever

bears its name amongst creatures. Almighty power and unerring wisdom, unblemished truth, spotless holiness, and tender mercies; every thing adapted to raise the admiration of an intelligent being, he perceives in God. His glory illuminates him in the works of creation and of providence, and manifests itself in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ in its strongest light. From these views he is excited to love God, and he expresses that love by discovering high and exalted thoughts of him; by reflecting with pleasure on his perfections as they appear in the works of nature, the wonders of grace, or the prospects of glory. This love of God for his own perfections, though not ordinarily discerned in the Christian at the first, yet as he grows in knowledge and faith becomes indisputably evident. It is discovered, even while he is in doubt about his own interest in God: because he will yet esteem and value him, be careful to commend his precepts, be faithful in his service, and speak good of his name.

Besides the incomparable excellency of God, a Christian has also other motives to love him. For, the more completely an object is suited to produce to us benefit and advantage, so much the more will our hearts be united to it, and feel a proportionate affection towards it. Accordingly the Christian loves God as his chief good. "God alone," saith he, "can be a "soul-satisfying portion to me. In his favour is my "life, while all beneath or beside him is replete with "vanity and disappointment, too mean, and too tran-"sient, fully to satisfy even one appetite; but God is "all-sufficient: *Whom have I in heaven but thee?*

" *and there is none upon earth that I can desire besides* " *thee.*"

This love to God expresses itself by frequent longings that he may share in his pardoning mercy, and be happy for ever in his acceptance. For *this* he is content to part with all; the love of God is to him above every thing. He can say with David, *I entreated thy favour with my whole heart; Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me.* He cannot be tranquil, while a cloud obscures his Father's face. The apprehension of his displeasure is most grievous to him; nor can he be satisfied till God be reconciled. He cries with vehemence like David, *Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.* He discovers also the sincerity of his love to God by a *delight* in him, no less than by desires after him. His soul is at rest while he can call God, *his* God. In such a view he rejoices in the divine favour more than he would in calling the whole world his own. It animates him in the highest degree, to think that *God is his portion.* And so truly does he rejoice in God, and delight in him with sincere affection, as to be satisfied under all the troubles to which he can be exposed. Amidst shame and reproach he can support and solace himself in the thought that God knows his innocency, and approves of him. In necessities, distresses, and afflictions, it is his strong consolation, that in this state the Lord knoweth his path, and that *when he is tried, he shall come forth as gold.* Even in the most perilous and dismaying circumstances, when the judgments of an incensed God are spreading consternation over whole countries, the

Christian in his love to God still finds a spring to cheer and refresh his soul, to which none but himself have access. *God is my refuge and strength,* saith he, *a very present help in trouble. Therefore will I not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.* For in the midst of all this fiery indignation issuing forth against his adversaries, he still beholds God in Christ Jesus reconciled to him and to every humbled sinner.

Such as these were the glorious expressions of love to God, even before the Lord Jesus Christ had ascended up on high, *leading captivity captive;* it cannot therefore reasonably be supposed that the more explicit knowledge of salvation which we enjoy, should not be more than equal to such a blessed effect. If the inspired Habakkuk could find such love to God in his heart as to say, *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive fail, and the fields yield no meat; the flocks be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation:* if a man of like passions with ourselves could so love God as to find comfort in him amidst the horrors of an universal dearth; certainly we may conclude that, now since the Messenger of the covenant, the Day-spring from on high, hath visited the church, the love which a real Christian bears to his God will enable his soul to feel at least as high a delight and exultation in his favour. And though, alas! few are observed in our own day to love God in a degree so fervent and intense as this, yet the endeavour and desire of all

who are Christians in sincerity is to do so. And they discover a principle of love the very same as this in kind, by their opposing the first tendencies in themselves to complain, though in a season of great tribulation; by rebuking themselves for the defectiveness of their delight in God, saying, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.* Psalm xlii. 9. Whether therefore the Christian be weak or strong, still it is apparent that he delights himself in the Lord. When he rejoices and triumphs in the midst of outward troubles, his delight in God blazes with vigour and brightness. And when it is his grief and heavy burden that he cannot act thus, this is still as true an expression of love to God, struggling in a sore conflict under the weight of oppression. For were it not the very joy of his heart to be glad in the Lord, and in every thing to give thanks, he could not possibly feel any pain on account of his dejection or want of joy in God in the time of tribulation. Such delight in God, even in the midst of prosperity, is a thing unintelligible to the world; and the utmost they can conceive attainable by man, is to bear distressing troubles with calmness. Therefore the very desire of a Christian to be strengthened *with all might,* according to God's glorious power, *unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness,* that is, to bear afflictions with holy triumph, in consideration of what God is to him and has done for him, is a demonstration that he delights in God.

9. It is an eminent part of the disposition of a Christian towards God, *to engage with diligence and pleasure in all the various exercises of devotion, and the*

use of the means of grace. Men have naturally a strong aversion from confession of sin, from prayer and praise, from hearing and reading God's word, and from receiving the holy sacrament. They engage in these duties only from custom, or are dragged to them merely to pacify conscience. These duties are therefore performed in a manner, which denotes the performance to be irksome. Hence in a few minutes' vain repetition each morning or evening, and in an attendance at church on Sundays, is generally comprised all the devotion of the natural man: in which he is conscious of no more pleasure than a child feels when repeating by rote, words of which he understands not the meaning. Or if there be more outward practice of devotion than this, it is from the popish notion that religious duties have in them an atoning virtue, and constitute a man holy, when punctually performed.

How different the temper of a Christian!—he lives in the constant exercise of a devout spirit. His recollection of the sinfulness of his past life, of that hateful period when *all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually;* when self was his god, and God was nothing to him but a name; his consciousness of blindness and depravity, still too much remaining, render it a relief to his soul, to pour out before God *complaints against himself.* As he increases in the knowledge of God and his own duty, the more strong are his desires to prostrate himself before the greatness of eternal Excellency, and to be filled with holy shame and confusion at his own sin and defilement. Sometimes he finds the springs of ingenuous sorrow opened within, and tastes a most solid satisfac-

tion in giving glory to the holiness of God and his law. And when his affections are not thus influenced, he still engages diligently in the confession of his sin, as a means of beholding more clearly its enormity and guilt, and of being impressed with a more stedfast hatred of it. With pleasure also he addresses his prayer to the *Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh,* that *divine grace* may be imparted to him, because he is fully persuaded that the strength and the increase of grace must be maintained by God, and not by himself. Human virtues and social qualities will grow, he sees, in nature's garden; but affiance in God, spiritual obedience, delight in him, and all the tempers becoming a creature and a sinner, must be the workmanship of God by his Spirit, which is given only to them that ask it. Therefore as natural hunger and thirst seek their proper gratifications, and the desire of every living soul is always turned towards that which it apprehends as its chiefest good; so it is his hunger and thirst to receive out of the fulness there is in Christ, grace for grace. So far therefore from thinking prayer a burden, or performing it merely as a duty, at particular times and seasons, the Christian may be said to pray without ceasing. All places, as well as his closet and his church, are witnesses of the fellowship he maintains in this manner with an invisible God. If his sleep depart from him, he is awake to the sublime sensations of prayer and devotion. "*With my soul, O God,*" saith he, "*have I desired* "*thee in the night, yea with my spirit within me will I* "*seek thee early.*"

From the same love to God springs a real joy to

praise and extol him. "*It becometh well the just* (saith "he) *to be thankful. Praise the Lord, O my soul,* "*and all that is within me, praise his holy name. For he* "*hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears,* "*and my feet from falling. My mouth shall therefore be* "*filled as it were with marrow and fatness, while I am* "*praising thee with joyful lips.* This spiritual ban- "quet shall prove as delicious to my mind as the feast "of the epicure does to his palate, when he is swal- "lowing the richest dainties which luxury can pro- "cure."

And from the same love which the Christian bears to his God and Saviour, every thing which belongs to God, his *word,* his *institutions* and *assemblies,* will be objects of his pleasure and delight. "Hath God," saith he, "written a book of knowledge and grace for "the use of man, and shall I not be glad to read and "hear the interesting contents of it? Shall I not ha- "bitually consult those divine oracles, which God "hath revealed from heaven? Yes, my delight is "placed on this book of God; *O! how I love thy* "*law! it is my meditation all the day.*"

Hath the glorious God appointed a mode of worship, and required men to assemble in multitudes to address his divine Majesty? "*I love,*" saith the real Christian, "*the habitation of thine house, and the place* "*where thine honour dwelleth: one day in thy courts is* "*better than a thousand.*"

Hath God appointed *pastors* and *teachers* for the work of the ministry, for the perfecting of his saints, for the edifying of his body the church; and promised to bless and prosper their labours, and to be with them always even to the end of the world? "It is with ex-

" alted expectations and steady attention," saith the Christian, " that I will hear the ministers of the Lord; " and look through the infirmities of the speaker to the " appointment and promise of the God of all grace, " who has seen fit to choose men to be instruments " and ministers of grace to men their hearers. And " hath he, *who was dead for* my sins, *and is alive again,* " *and liveth for evermore,* left with his church the me- " morial of his abundant goodness and bleeding love, " commanding his people to feast upon it, that his sa- " crifice might grow more precious in their eyes? I " will, with solemn joy and gratitude, join the faith- " ful company who eat of that bread and drink of that " cup, as a public testimony that every blessing I have " received of God, and every benefit I hope for, does " and will descend upon me only through the atoning " death of Jesus Christ the righteous."

And though it must be confessed, that it is not in the Christian's power to be always full of delight in holy duties; though he has too often cause to bemoan the want of a more devout and spiritual frame of mind when he is using the means of grace; yet the godly disposition of his soul suffers no such change. God is still the constant object of his reverence and trust, of his gratitude and love: and therefore whether the pleasures of devotion in the more solemn acts of it, be more or less, he is still punctual in them; he grows not weary of them, though he does more and more of the body of sin, which proves so heavy an incumbrance when he would have his soul full of " The blessed unction from above." *

* Ordination Service.

10. *Humility* is another peculiar and most distinguishing part of the disposition of a Christian. By his humility, is not meant his entertaining a worse opinion of himself, or abasing himself lower than he really ought to do; but his living under a constant sense and acknowledgment of his own weakness, corruption, and sin, in the sight of God. All beside himself dissemble, and offend God in this matter. For though some confess their own weakness, they magnify their attainments, and over-rate what they own to be the gift of God, because it belongs to themselves. They will not allow, that after all they have done, and all they have received, their plea must still be this, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* The Christian has learned better the poverty and sin of fallen man, even in his best estate. As the man who improves in learning, sees more of his own ignorance when he has made a considerable progress, than when he first began, so the Christian, the more he advances in the illumination of his mind, and in a more distinct apprehension of the extent of his duty towards God, becomes more sensible of defects which had hitherto escaped his notice; and becomes humbled for them. "The commandment of God," he exclaims, "requires in every the minutest instance, that I do no-"thing forbidden by it, nor leave undone, in heart "or life, any one thing which it enjoins; that I should "ever exercise a perfect regularity of affection and "desire, and ever maintain a perfect rectitude of "temper and of thought."—Having his eye fixed upon this purity, and acknowledging that God ought in this manner to be obeyed by every intelligent being, he clearly discerns his own innumerable failings; and

his inherent depravity appears without a covering. Therefore, when in his deportment he is, in the eyes of men, unblameable and unreproveable, and adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things, it is still the sentiment of his heart, living and dying, that he has cause to implore forgiveness for his trespasses against God: crying out before him, "*Behold, I am* "*vile; enter not into judgment with thy servant, O* "*Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*"

Thus is the Christian preserved humble by his knowledge of the law; and no less so by the knowledge of the Gospel. "Have my sins," he cries, "rendered "me so abominable in the eyes of God, that it would "reflect dishonour upon his Majesty to receive my "prayers, or admit me to any share in his pardoning "mercy upon a less consideration than the death and "intercession of his own Son for me; and can I in this "state regard myself as any thing better than a guilty "sinner? Shall I presume upon my own holiness, as "perfectly free from blemish and defilement, when I "am not permitted so much as to ask a pardon, with-"out imploring the mediation of a Redeemer, that I "may be heard?"—Thus deeply laid is the foundation of Christian humility; a grace, above all others, the very antidote to the first-born sin of man, and to every delusion of Satan. By this, the Christian is made meet for that world where God is all in all; where the most exalted spirits maintain a perpetual sense of their infinite distance from God, and abase themselves before him continually, in the midst of all those transporting manifestations of glory which they enjoy. *The four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the*

throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne. Rev. iv. 10.

These several particulars present those excellent tempers respecting God which rule and govern every real Christian. Now if you, who have heard this description, live destitute of any of the dispositions towards God your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, here enumerated, you assume a character, in calling yourself a Christian, to which you have no Scriptural title. It is true these several dispositions are possessed in very different degrees by the several members of Christ's body, glowing in some with brighter lustre, in others with less, as one star differeth from another star in glory; yet the joint influence of them all is essential to the very being of a real Christian, as the union of the soul and body is to the constitution of every individual man. And with as much propriety and truth may a lifeless corpse be called a member of society, as the soul which is void of any of these dispositions, be numbered amongst the members of the mystical body of Christ. For what more monstrous can be conceived, than a Christian who has no fear of God; a Christian who pays no absolute submission to his authority; a Christian who is ungrateful, unbelieving, and altogether selfish; a Christian without love to God and Christ, without piety, without humility? Take away one of these dispositions, and you deprive the soul of that which is a part of its spiritual life, and without which it must expire.

Examine, therefore, and prove yourself, whether you belong to Christ. *If a man say he hath faith, and hath not works,* that is, the tempers by which only the influence and power of faith can be discerned, *can*

that faith save him? You may add or omit what you please, in the character of one you choose to call a Christian; you may make him only a person devoted by a baptismal dedication to God; or one who gives his assent to this truth, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ that should come into the world; or one who worships among Christians;—but the only genuine standard of a Christian is the written word of God. Now this speaks aloud to men at all times, and in all ages: it makes no difference; it allows of no abatement; it affirms in the most positive manner, and affirms it in a variety of different expressions, that *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.* Gal. v. 24. That *if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature;* his heart, once profane, now pays a supreme regard to God; is willing to obey and submit to him in every thing; seeks his honour and approbation; loves him in Christ Jesus, and delights continually in nearer and nearer approaches to him.

This, this only is the genuine character of a Christian, even were it not to be found in one of a million, nor in one of a nation. To delude yourself with notions and fancies, however popular, however supported by the great and learned, that you shall partake of the benefits of Christ in the eternal world, without being thus conformed to his precepts and example in this, is to make Christianity deservedly the jest of infidels, and the scorn of all who can distinguish what is really excellent from a pompous useless profession. As you love therefore the salvation of your own soul; as you would not be found a hypocrite in the day when

the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; as you would not be the cause of infidels blaspheming that worthy name whereby you are called; O! take good heed to yourself, and see that for your own part you are found a worshipper of God in spirit and in truth; see that the most exact observer of your manners and tempers shall be forced, if he judge with candour, to confess that the name of God is great in your eyes, and his glory all your aim. *

* See Prayer the *Fifteenth*.

SUNDAY XXIII. CHAPTER XXIII.

The Tempers of a Christian towards his Fellow-creatures—Sincerity—Justice.

THE Scripture teaches us that God hath made all things for himself. Yet notwithstanding the supreme regard which the Lord Almighty ever bears to his own glory, he is so far from requiring any sort of homage from us which is detrimental to the interests of society, that it is impossible to please God, without exercising every benevolent temper towards man: for no parent ever more affectionately studied the happiness of his own offspring, or delighted in their harmony, than the Father of the spirits of all flesh delights in seeing us obey his great command, of loving one another without dissimulation.

And were the divine commands in this respect uni-

versally obeyed, the church of Christ would be a perfect picture of the heavenly world, one perpetual intercourse of brotherly kindness. It is, alas! too notorious, that few in comparison, of professed believers have ever been subject to this law of love. Nevertheless, it is the noble characteristic of a Christian to be found in the constant practice of those tempers which every man living would have others exercise towards himself: and to stand as much distinguished by the excellency of his deportment towards his fellow-creatures, as he does by his faith, devotion, and zeal towards God.

I shall therefore now make it my business to *delineate those several amiable tempers,* by means of which the Christian proves an invaluable blessing to *society.* And with respect to each temper, I shall point out *the Scriptural motives* which excite and maintain its exercise.

May the God of Christians make this representation of their duty towards men effectual to convince every reader, that if he have at heart the welfare of society, it can only be promoted to the utmost, where the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ is sincerely embraced!

I. In delineating the tempers of a Christian towards his fellow-creatures, I shall begin with that eminent one, SINCERITY. As a Christian then, you will esteem it your duty, constantly to speak the truth, according to the information you have received, in all the affairs and occurrences of life. You will lay a charge upon your conscience to give no commendations where you think they are not due; nor to flatter any as possessed of excellencies which you see not in them; nor to speak as if you regarded them with peculiar respect,

when you only design by this mean to answer private ends, to please the vanity of the human heart, or to deceive. For though in the commerce of the world, and among the refinements of the polite, such artifice is valued as an accomplishment, it is, in fact, a horrid perversion of language, a dissimulation which Christian simplicity abhors. And as sincerity will be conspicuous in all your conversation with respect to *persons* and *things*, so the same excellent temper will display its influence with respect to all your *promises* and *engagements*. When you have bound yourself by a promise to do any good office, or confer any benefit, the right of the thing promised hath, in the court of conscience, and before the God of truth, passed over from you to the person who received the promise: wherefore you have, without his leave, no more power to recal or reverse it, than if you had given him a legal bond. Consequently you will esteem yourself obliged to stand to the performance of your word, though it may be much to your own prejudice. And this in every instance where you have made a promise, unless some conditions were specified which have not been fulfilled, or something afterwards has come to light, which annuls its obligation. Above all, you will shew an inviolable attachment to sincerity when your testimony is required in a *court of judicature*, and in decision of matters of right. Here, divesting yourself of affection on the one hand, and prejudice on the other, you will explain the true state of the case, and represent every thing without disguise, as it has fallen under your notice.

In these several important particulars, and in all similar to them, you will pay a conscientious regard to

sincerity. *Your motives* also will be distinct from those of the mere moralist, and infinitely more cogent. *He* may be an advocate for truth and sincerity, and would have all men practise it, because it is the cement of society and the only foundation of mutual confidence. Feeble motives, alas! when opposed to the natural selfishness of man, and to those violent temptations which allure the indigent and dependent, to obtain money and serve their private interest.

The consideration of the character of the great and glorious God, is, on the contrary, your encouragement and support, O Christian! in the exercise of this temper. He is himself the God of truth, and it is, you know, what he commands, and what he delights in. *These are the things that ye shall do,* saith he, *Speak ye every man truth to his neighbour.* Zech. viii. 16. The want of sincerity he stigmatizes with reproach, and threatens every false tongue with eternal woe. In the character which your God gives of an heir of heaven, you are assured that he is one *that hateth lying,* (Prov. xiii. 5.) and that *speaketh the truth in his heart.* Psalm xv. 2. *Lying lips,* you read, *are an abomination to the Lord.* Prov. xii. 22. A mark, that men *are of* their *father the devil, and the lusts of* their *father* they *will do;* (John viii. 44.) and that *whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, shall be cast into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.* Rev. xxi. 8.

In you, therefore, these motives will unite with force, namely, a desire to please God, and to dwell for ever in his presence, and a fear of despising his high and amiable authority, of incurring his severe displeasure, and the just punishment of everlasting misery. These motives will arm you so completely,

that you can dread no evil as sufficient to deter, nor meet with any bribe as sufficient to allure you, from the practice of sincerity. Add to this, that the Holy Ghost, which every true believer in Jesus Christ receives, is called the Spirit of *truth;* and his fruit is in all goodness, righteousness, and *truth.* It is impossible therefore to be a Christian, and at the same time to live under the dominion of a false and deceitful tongue.

If your conscience therefore accuse you in this matter, O! cease to flatter yourself that you are in any degree righteous on account of all you may boast, or glory in, beside. No; unless you abhor falsehood, and delight in sincerity and truth, be assured it is not making many prayers, it is not extolling the riches of free grace, nor attempting to cover yourself with the robe of the Saviour's righteousness, that will either excuse or screen your heinous wickedness. On the contrary, if you can thus perniciously abuse the grace of God, it only proves that your idea of him is infinitely despicable: that you conceive of him, as if he could be pleased with what would even kindle your own resentment, namely, deceitful compliment and unmeaning adulation; as if he would regard words or speculative notions, while, in the weighty matters of his law, you set at nought his counsel. No: sincerity and truth are the very essence of Christian practice; and if you are a believer, you will eminently possess these shining qualities.

II. It is the temper of a Christian constantly to act towards his fellow-creatures with JUSTICE. Has the providence of God placed you in some public situation, investing you with the dignity of a magistrate,

a senator, or a judge? you will vigorously oppose oppression, and punish the oppressor: you will be active to put salutary laws in execution, to establish tranquillity, and promote peace: you will be mindful of God, the high ordainer of all civil government, to whom every one intrusted with the discharge of any part of it, stands as strictly accountable as the steward to his master. What God so solemnly commands, will form your public character: *Thou shalt do no unrighteousness in judgment. Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.* Levit. xix. 15. *He that ruleth over men* (like the Prince of peace, to whom the words primarily refer) *must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springeth out of the earth by clear shining after rain.* 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4.

Have you *riches* in such abundance as to create a numerous set of dependents? you will exercise Christian justice towards them all: you will scorn to grasp after the utmost farthing your estates can produce, till your tenants, wedded as it were to the place of their nativity, groan beneath the load of rents unreasonably advanced: you will perceive an inexpressible degree of injustice also in the fashionable custom of owing large sums for your furniture, equipage, and dress, while your tradesmen are almost at their wits end to pay for the things you call *your own;* while they are daily tortured with the alternative of bankruptcy, if they recover not their debts; or of ruin, through the cruel resentment of their opulent creditors if they do.

Your rule is positive and express, *Owe no man any*

thing, but to love one another; and the opposite practice, though punishable in the rich by no human law (except in extreme cases) is marked as the object of God's abhorrence, and the certain way to fall under the severity of his displeasure. *Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton.* James v. 4, 5. The application of this Scripture, from the day-labourer, to every person in trade, whose money is unreasonably withheld, will be obvious and effectual to you, who regard the reproofs of God in his holy word.

But are you occupied yourself *in trade* or merchandize, then the energy of your Christian principles will shew themselves in a still stronger light. You will not suffer the love of money to bias or corrupt your conscience. You will take no advantage either of the ignorance or necessity of those with whom you traffick by putting bad things into their hands for good, or by exacting an exorbitant price. You will neither take, nor use, nor detain through force or fraud, what is your neighbour's property.

Now if any one should say, it is not possible to live so honestly in the present state of the world; that the righteous man, by dealing so conscientiously in the midst of those who have no conscience, would make himself a prey, and therefore must either leave his trade, or starve in it: I answer, that violent as the temptations, and plausible as the pleas are, to conform to general custom, in conniving at breaches of honesty, and in living upon the wages of iniquity;

yet, the motives for *you* to be punctually just and righteous in all your dealings, if you have any title to the character of a Christian, must still preponderate. For (whatever is the case with others, who have never received the word of God in deed and in truth) you know how express and peremptory the command of your God is in this matter. You know that God, who indispensably requires you to be honest, leaves no foundation for the worldly infidel excuses constantly urged to palliate cheating, viz. the necessity of being dishonest in order to prosper; for he pledges his own most sacred word for your provision, if you will deal uprightly. Thus saith the Lord the most high God, governor of heaven and earth, *Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small* (that is, one to buy and another to sell with). *Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord thy God.* Deut. xxv. 13—16. You hear him expressing his abhorrence of the iniquity, so *customary* in trade, in the most alarming manner: *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure, that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabiants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.* Micah vi. 10—13.

Should it be supposed that regard for yourself and family will gain the ascendancy, and be prompting you to use common arts of fraud; I answer, that even this pressing temptation will be counteracted by the unalterable declarations of your God: *Wo unto him that buildeth his house with unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong*, Jer. xxxii. 13. *Be not deceived: the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* 1 Cor. vi. 9. Besides, the Lord that bought you with his own blood, and from whose grace you alone expect the gift of salvation, has commanded you to conform in your whole conduct to the following rule: *All things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them, for this is the law and the prophets.*

Were *you*, therefore, after these full instructions, which you receive as the irrevocable righteous decrees of the Almighty; were you to do any thing unjustly, you know you must renounce both the authority of God, and your interest in the redemption which is in Jesus. You know, that in the very day you determine to follow the evil customs of the world in this point, you must bid farewell to all solid peace of conscience, forfeit that delightful communion with God, which has been the sweetest enjoyment of your life, and give up the pleasing expectation of a blessed immortality, for remorse, for fear, or, what is worse, for a conscience past feeling.

Comparing therefore things spiritual with things temporal, you will determine that honesty is always the best policy. And though you know that injustice and fraud possess so powerful an influence over the world, that you may *run to and fro through the streets*, and *seek to find a man, if there be any that executeth*

judgment; yet, unseduced and uncorrupted by the multitude of sinners, you will pity those who purchase gain at the expence of their integrity. Surely, you will say, *They have made their faces harder than a rock. Surely, they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.* Jer. v. 3, 4.

Further; Are you the head of a family? you will then regard it as a grand branch of your Christian duty to give to your servants that which is just and equal. You will not treat them with haughtiness, because of their dependent state: you will recede from no engagement into which you have entered with them, nor withhold wages which are due: you will make a conscience of not exacting from them harder labour than they are well able to perform. In case of slight offences, you will not provoke them with threatenings, nor gall them with words of abuse; nor, when you observe them faithful in your service, be backward to give them suitable encouragement. Above all, you will abhor that custom which is an indelible reproach to a civilized, much more to a Christian, country, of abandoning them in the time of sickness, and through fear of paying for their cure, turning them out without money, without friends, when their condition loudly calls for medicine, attendance, and compassion.

The command of your God respecting the justice due from masters to their servants is most express, and the care he has taken to procure for them a benevolent regard from all who reverence his authority, is very remarkable. You hear him, in their behalf, thus addressing you: *Thou shalt not oppress an hired ser-*

vant that is poor and needy—lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be sin unto thee. Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. You are assured that the God of heaven and earth, like an impartial loving Father, equally resents the wrong done to any of his offspring; and with him is no respect of persons. The knowledge of this will lead you to regard your domestic dependents in a respectful light: it will lead you to repress the emotions of a selfish hasty spirit, as the faithful Job was wont to do: *If I did despise the cause of my man-servant or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me:* that is, if in any matter of debate betwixt them and myself, I paid little regard to justice, condemning and accusing them when guiltless, or treating them with harshness because in my power; *What shall I then do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?* Job xxxi. 13—15. Thus the awful thought that you have a Master in heaven, will regulate your deportment towards your fellow-creatures, over whom his providence has given you authority.

So essential to the character of a real Christian is this part of justice which is due from all masters to their servants, that whosoever liveth in the violation of this duty, does but expose himself and the faith of Jesus to derision, by pretending regard for it. For what can be more contemptible, what more odious, than for a man pretending to be a follower of Jesus, who is a tyrant in his house, and frantic towards his servants? One of the most melancholy objects on earth, is a passionate governor of a family, calling himself a believer, and valuing himself on his relation to Christ. All

the servants who are connected with him, and all who observe his carriage towards them, will be led to despise and to revile that religion which they see joined with such loathsome hypocrisy. From regard therefore to the name and Gospel of Jesus, that it may not through you be blasphemed, as well as from a sense of interest, and a love to the commands of your Saviour, you, O Christian! will give no occasion for your servants to complain of your unjust deportment towards them.

But if, instead of the place of authority and government, the all-wise God has fixed you in that of subjection, *as a servant or an apprentice,* you will faithfully follow the directions which the Scripture gives you for the exercise of justice in that condition of life. You will abhor the thought of wasting, embezzling, or secreting to your own use any of your master's money, goods, or provisions. You will neither do this yourself, nor basely connive at others who are wicked enough to do it. You will not see things spoiled before your eyes; nor give away to tattlers and busy-bodies what is not your own to give. You will not be idle and slothful, because those are absent who are to overlook you and force you to diligence. You will think it your duty to consult the interest of your master, and to make it in some sense your own.

The *motives* which influence you, if you have any title to be called a Christian, to do so much more in this respect than it is common to find other servants doing, are peculiar and mighty in operation. You will act thus from a principle of conscience, con-

cerned to be approved by God in your behaviour, and determined to do nothing knowingly and wilfully that is offensive to him, whether any beside himself are present to observe you, or not. From a desire also to adorn and recommend to others that Gospel of which you know the excellency, you will be uniform in the practice of honesty and justice. In this substantial manner you will evidence that your faith is more than a barren notion; by proving that it makes you worthy of all the confidence your master can place in you, and that it preserves you from falling into those lies or frauds so generally the practice of servants in almost every family. This conscientious honesty you will regard as one of the most substantial proofs that you know God. You will judge that your master must necessarily mock at your religion, and with justice too, however zealous you may seem, if he should find that you pilfer as others, and that you are not to be trusted when removed from his inspection.

Now whatever opposition and hatred you may incur by such conscientious deportment, you will patiently endure; assured that in doing your duty in this manner, and upon these principles, you shall receive from God the reward of an everlasting inheritance. And though the value of your services, or the things in which you discover your integrity, be little in the judgment of the world; you know they shall witness for you, that you were faithful and obedient; and, like the widow's mite, be as much in the sight of God as greater services. Since he, where there is a willing mind, accepteth according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.

But lest such promises should not alone prove suffi-

cient to animate you to the practice of justice, you know from the infallible word of God, that no fraud, however common, however slightly thought of, either in wasting your master's substance, or neglecting his business, much less in purloining his goods, if persisted in, will be overlooked; that *every one that doth wrong, shall receive for the wrong that he doth;* whether poor or rich, master or servant.

Another important instance in which every real Christian manifests his impartial love of justice, is by *paying those customs* which are by law enacted, and from thence become his earthly sovereign's right. This very thing is expressly mentioned and enjoined by the command of your God. You are to *give tribute to whom tribute, and custom to whom custom is due.* Besides this most express command, you have the example of your Redeemer. When he had neither silver nor gold, he wrought a miracle that he might pay the tribute enacted of him and his poor disciple. He did this, rather than seem to countenance the iniquity of defrauding the crown of its just revenues. You will therefore renounce the custom too common in trade, of attempting either to bribe the king's officers to betray their trust, or of eluding their vigilance. You will renounce such practices as utterly irreconcileable with any regard to Christian duty.

The last instance of justice which I shall insist on, is *that of restitution* to all whom you have wilfully injured, either in their souls or their bodies, their estate or reputation. Have you led any friend or acquaintance into error, or tempted them to sin? Have you solicited and obtained their compliance to some base

and guilty practice? The first step you will necessarily take, when you yourself repent and believe in Jesus, will be to endeavour to recover from danger your companions in iniquity, and, as far as lieth in you, to make them sensible of the crimes, in which you have shared, alas! so deeply with them. In case you have defrauded any one, you will (like Zaccheus upon his first receiving the Saviour) make what restitution you are able; esteeming it a baseness provoking in the sight of God and man, to live yourself in superfluities, while others are suffering loss through your former injustice. All evidences of the truth of your faith you must esteem utterly deceitful, if you can enjoy the spoils, of which you have defrauded your neighbour.

Further, As a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, if at any time, through private resentment or licentious language, you have been either the inventor or propagator of a falsehood to the injury of your neighbour; you will think it a part of justice to make a particular retraction of the calumny you advanced, and openly acknowledge the particular aggravations which you have forged. For though it may be prejudicial to your own reputation, thus to point out the truth; though it may make the world abate the esteem it at present has for you; this esteem belongs not to you, but to the person you have injured; and to him you must return it, though you expose yourself. For however mortifying this procedure may appear, it is absolutely necessary; and is the only proof that you repent and abhor the falsehood and licentiousness of your tongue. *

* See Prayer the *Sixteenth*.

SUNDAY XXIV. CHAPTER XXIV.

The same Subject continued—Mercy—Meekness.

OF *sincerity* and *justice*, as essentially requisite in forming the character of a Christian, we have already spoken. These virtues, when practised as they have been here explained, are too often thought to comprehend all that can be required of man. It must however be remembered that these are but the least considerable of the branches which spring from the root of faith in Christ. Where this root is fixed in the heart, such negative righteousness towards men will in no wise be deemed sufficient, nor will you rest satisfied with bare freedom from wilfully injuring, or deceiving any of your fellow-creatures: on the contrary, to the conscientious observance of truth and justice, you will add,

III. *The love and practice of* MERCY. Whenever the providence of God places the miserable before your eyes, as it did of old the wounded traveller before the priest and Levite, you will be moved with compassion. Their pains and diseases of body, their troubles and distresses of mind, their necessitous circumstances, their unjust sufferings from others, and even the miseries brought upon themselves by their own iniquity, will excite in you a fellow-feeling for them. So that if you have *much*, such objects will receive liberal relief from your bounty. After the example of Job, because actuated by the same spirit, you will be-

come, in the distribution of your alms, eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the afflicted poor. The blessing of him that was ready to perish will come upon you, and you will make the widow's heart to sing for joy.

But if you are not in circumstances to give plenteously, still the temper of your heart will be no less friendly and charitable than if you were. Though poor, your bowels will yearn towards the distressed; and though you have neither bread of your own, to bestow on the hungry, nor know where to make application for their relief, there still remains one way in which your merciful disposition will evidence itself; a way pleasing to God, and profitable to men; you will make your intercession to the Father of all mercies and the God of all consolation, to put an end to their afflictions, or to support them under the pressure.

Further, you will exercise mercy, if you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, towards those, whom, either the injuries they have done you, or the debts for which they stand answerable, have put in your power to punish. In such cases, where mercy to the wretched individual will not prove a barbarous lenity to the community in general, you will relax in your demands, and wave the rigorous execution of the law. More especially, and without exception, where the dispensations of divine Providence have disabled those indebted to you from answering your legal demands, you will abhor the thought of afflicting him whom God hath wounded. You will reject with indignation the worldly maxim of seeking some sort of satisfaction in lieu of your debt, by causing the man by whom

you suffer to languish in a prison; a punishment equally unprofitable to yourself, and the object of your severity. For the same reason, you will, in all cases where the innocent must suffer with the guilty, choose rather to be a sufferer in some degree yourself, than bring many, for the fault of one, into misery, by taking away the support of a whole family.

Besides these cases, there is one in which a Christian's merciful temper shines with the greatest lustre; I mean in tenderly regarding *the spiritual miseries and dangers of the human race.* It is, I confess, generous and noble to alleviate and remove the sufferings of the body, and to take a pleasure in doing good to them who are in adversity, by liberal gifts. Yet how limited, how partial, how transient are the benefits! What can alms avail to comfort, where every distemper of the mind still rages?—Pride, envy, hatred, wrath, malice, strife, or gross impurity in families, destroy all good, all enjoyment of comfort. You relieve the family day by day, but the husband abuses his wife, or tyrannically oppresses his children; or the proud imperious wife vexes her husband, driving him into drunkenness as a refuge from her unworthy conduct; or the children, after the bad examples they see at home, increase in wickedness as in stature; unrestrained by parental authority, and trained up in the habitual indulgence of every lawless inclination. In every station and walk of life, immortal souls are provoking their adorable Maker and Benefactor to jealousy: spurning at his counsel and his salvation, and heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. These are the great objects which, louder than even widows or orphans, call for mercy, and the most ac-

tive exertions of our pity. These things will awaken a lively pity in your heart, if you are a Christian in truth.—You cannot without a tender sorrow, see immortal souls thus sleeping on the brink of perdition! As you firmly believe all the realities of the invisible world, you must be much affected with such a melancholy spectacle; *I beheld,* you will say, *the transgressors, and I was grieved because men kept not thy law.*

And this compassion to the souls of men will inspire you with activity and zeal to save them from ruin. You will labour to turn sinners from the error of their ways, by private entreaties and winning persuasions, by faithful and repeated declarations of their danger, where there is any opportunity of speaking, any ear to hear, or lucid interval of reflection; by distributing such books, as tend to alarm the conscience, and urge the ignorant and obdurate sinner to reflection, repentance, and consequent newness of life. Also by assisting those who are engaged in the important work of spreading the knowledge of the Lord.*

If you ask, What is there peculiar to the real Christian, by which a disposition so extensively merciful is excited and maintained? I answer, the reverence he pays to the command of God, and the full persuasion he enjoys of the truth of his promises; but still more, the sense he has of his own redemption by Christ, and the agency of the Holy Ghost on his heart.

* There are two venerable societies in London, engaged in the glorious work of distributing Bibles, Testaments, and other devotional books. These societies are supported by subscription, and a guinea or two annually contributed, may often become, in the long chain of causes and effects, productive of present peace and eternal salvation to the souls of many. One of these excellent societies meets in Bartlet's-Buildings, Holborn, the other at Haberdasher's Hall.

The command of God to be merciful, is most express and frequent: *If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren—thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him.—Beware that thine eye be not evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him.* Deut. xv. 7—10. In every description of the tempers which God enjoins us to shew to our fellow-creatures, mercy bears a very distinguished part. *He hath shewn thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love* mercy, *and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah vi. 8. In his estimate, *pure and undefiled religion,* as it respects our fellow-creatures, *is to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction.* No duty is more frequently urged than this: *Be ye therefore merciful, as your heavenly Father also is merciful.* Luke vi. 36. *Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another.* 1 Pet. iii. 8.

And as these commands of God prove the necessity of a merciful temper in all that are approved by him, so do his repeated promises invite and encourage the Christian to the practice of it. For though none of these promises imply any worth in a merciful temper where it subsists together with the love of sin, or enmity to the cross of Christ; though they are not to be construed as if mercy would be rewarded independently of faith in the Redeemer: yet are they of great efficacy to remove the objections which are generally made by our worldly hearts against the exercise of love and bounty: since they so fully assure us, that all acts of beneficence which spring from faith, from

love to God, and an obedient heart, are well-pleasing to him, and shall be honoured through his grace with an immense reward. *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.* Matt. v. 7. *He which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.* James v. 20. *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* John xiii. 34, 35. Add to this, that astonishing declaration of the Redeemer's regard to this excellent temper, even from his throne of judgment, and in the presence of the whole universe. He will then reward every exercise of mercy, as if it had been conferred immediately upon himself; as if the afflictions it relieved had been sustained in his own person; as if he alone had received benefit and consolation from it; *In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* Matt. xxv. 40.

But still even beyond the force of these powerful precepts and promises, your own sense of redemption by the blood of the cross, will excite and maintain in you a readiness to, and delight in, every kind of mercy. You remember your apostasy from God to have been such, by natural disposition, and to have been so confirmed by practice, that it would have been just had God destroyed you both body and soul in hell. But, instead of this insupportable doom, you, O Christian! know that God *commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died* for us. An instance of mercy absolutely without a parallel, both in itself and in its beneficial efficacy to the

church of God. This, you know, is the only foundation of your peace and hope; this is all your salvation and all your desire. In consequence of your living under affecting views of such transcendent grace, by which you are reconciled to God and made his heir, the love of Christ will constrain you; with a pleasing energy it will urge you to all the various exercises of brotherly-kindness and charity. A delightful emotion of mind, resulting from these views, peculiar to the faithful, will lead you, even without an immediate regard either to the command or promises of God, to this practical conclusion, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* 1 John iv. 11.

Further; Besides these awful commands, and these inviting promises, besides the warmth and strength of God's mercy towards men, manifested in the death of Jesus, the mighty influence also of the Holy Ghost is promised to dwell with the Christian. By his agency, through means of the motives offered in the written word, he is delivered from the unfeeling selfishness or the partial good-will natural to the human heart. For the fruit of that Spirit which distinguishes and infinitely ennobles every true believer in Jesus, is expressly affirmed to be love, and to be *in all goodness.*

IV. Meekness is another essential branch of the Christian temper. If you are a believer in Jesus, you will not hastily take offence, or yield to the suggestions of pride and self-love. A trivial injury, a reproachful word, a venial indiscretion, or a casual loss, will not inflame your mind. Nay, supposing you are tried by some great provocation, you will watch over your own selfish spirit with a godly jealousy; lest you should be hurried into passion by ill usage, or drawn

by the misconduct of others to dishonour your holy profession, to bring guilt upon your own soul, and grieve the Spirit of God. Even when you suffer such considerable injuries, as render it a duty to seek redress, you will still exercise meekness. You will first use every mild method to bring, if possible, your adversary to reason. You will be disposed to try arguments before punishment, conference before law, and private admonition before you proceed to make a public example. And, if at length your own security, or the common good compel you to seek relief from the interference of public justice, even this will be done by you with calmness, without passionate exclamations, or bitter reflections upon your enemy.

Further, You must as a real Christian, shew the meekness of your spirit by *carefully avoiding just cause of offence to others.* For this excellent grace does not more effectually support under provocations, than enable men to deny their own inclinations rather than give uneasiness. It will make you cautious, that neither your words nor actions occasion any needless provocation. You will not be overbearing in company, nor positive and warm in asserting your own opinions. You will be civil and respectful to every one. Men generally know how to do all this where they think it necessary to serve their temporal interests: from better principles and from higher views you will make it the habitual exercise of your life towards every one.

And to mention no more instances in which your Christian meekness will eminently discover itself, you will shew that you are under the government of this temper on the subject of *religion.* Instead of overflowing with the gall of bitterness against those who

depart from the undoubted essentials of Christianity, you will endeavour their recovery by calmly producing the strongest arguments in demonstration of the truth; and by cordially praying that they may have understanding and a sincere heart to perceive their force. You will abhor the thought of concealing your private resentment under the venerable name of zeal for the glory of God and the good of man. You will not think that contempt of your erring brother, or passion against him, can be justified by any means, or on any account whatsoever. Therefore, though it is so common for those who call themselves Christians, to vent their rage against the adversaries of our most holy faith, you *in meekness* will instruct *those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.* 2 Tim. ii. 25.

Thus extensive is the grace of meekness, that eminent branch of the Christian temper, as it respects our fellow-creatures.

Now the peculiar *motives* which will excite and support its influence in your heart, if you are a Christian, are such as the philosophers of old, and their unbelieving successors at this day, know nothing of, though in both, there has often been a resemblance of this amiable temper. You will not be meek from the love of ease, which leads some to submit to the ill humours of others, rather than bear the trouble of contention, and by which they gain the credit of sweetness of temper; neither from a proud disdain of appearing to be hurt by malice or perverseness, which would imply a feebleness and weakness in your own mind: but you will be meek because this is the will of God concerning you. He commands you to

be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men; to put off anger, wrath, hatred, variance, emulation, and strife; and to put on kindness, meekness, and long-suffering. Your Saviour, the foundation of all your hope and access to God with confidence, denounces a severe threatening against every sally of unbridled passion; *Whosoever,* says he, *is angry with his brother without a cause,* that is, through a selfish passionate spirit, *shall be in danger of the judgment,* that is, shall fall under the anger of God: *and whosoever shall say to him, Raca,* or thou worthless fellow, suffering himself to mock and deride others, shall be still more severely punished, *shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool,* that is, shall allow himself to be so far transported by his passion as to revile another, to represent him not only as fit to be despised, but even to be abhorred, he shall meet with still sorer punishment, *he shall be in danger of hell-fire!* So awful are the denunciations by which you, O Christian, are warned to watch against every violation of meekness, and to regard anger as one of the most inveterate enemies of your soul. Besides the express and repeated command of God proving the absolute necessity of meekness, such honour is put upon this grace as must render it the ambition of every Christian to possess it: *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.* Prov. xvi. 32. The meek are pronounced blessed, and the inheritance of the good land, wherein dwelleth righteousness, is promised to them. Matt. v. 5. Meekness is distinguished as the principal ornament of a Christian, and honoured

above every encomium, as being *of great price in the sight of God.*

Added to all these motives, there still remains one more powerful,—the astonishing meekness of that adorable person, the Author and Finisher of our salvation. The inspired writers always remind us of this great pattern, and fix our attention on the cross of Christ, when they would make us sensible of the hatefulness of an impetuous, quarrelsome, or angry temper. *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that he might bring us to God.* He, your Lord and Master, was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. I must go, therefore, you will say, and implore grace from God to imitate this perfect pattern; since it is written, *He that saith, he abideth in him,* that is, in Christ, *ought himself also to walk even as he walked.* 1 John ii. 6,

A still more effectual mean than any yet named, which disposes every real Christian to the exercise of meekness, is what has passed in his own heart. Self-abasement and shame for sin, are inseparable from repentance and true faith in Jesus Christ. A kind of knowledge this, which greatly subdues haughtiness of spirit; and by so doing makes it easy to pass by those

provocations, which set the proud and self-admiring in a flame. As persons who have committed some enormous crime, when truly penitent, find no resentment of passion, whatever is said of them, or whatever is done to them: so to your heart, when humbled for your sin before God, this thought will readily occur, under every provocation to wrath, "Of far "worse treatment am I deserving, and of a much se-"verer trial of my patience."

This powerful inducement to suppress all sinful anger, and prevent every violation of the law of meekness, St. Paul urges in its full force. He founds his exhortation solely on the sinful state in which we are all by nature involved, as every true believer in Christ practically knows. *Put them in mind,* saith he, *to be gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.* Tit. iii. 2, 3.

As you make a progress in the knowledge and practice of religion, fresh evidences of your own corruption will discover themselves, and prove so many repeated admonitions to pray for, and exercise, meekness; knowing with what merciful forbearance God endures the multitude of your failings. For though the dominion of sin be destroyed, the struggle between the flesh and the spirit still remains, and consequently sufficient cause for humbling yourself, till mortality be swallowed up of life.*

* See Prayer the *Sixteenth*.

SUNDAY XXV. CHAPTER XXV.

The same Subject continued—Candour—Forgiveness of Enemies—Humility.

IN delineating the character of a real Christian, as it respects the tempers he exercises towards his fellow-creatures, we have already described him as *sincere* and *just* in all his dealings, as *merciful* and kind towards all men, *meek* and patient under all provocations. But, besides these, other graces are still requisite to complete his character. These I proceed to enumerate.

V. CANDOUR is an essential branch of the Christian temper: it discovers itself by the charitable judgment which it passes on the *actions*, the *characters*, and the *intentions of our fellow-creatures.*

By their *actions* you are not to understand such as are plainly condemned by the word of God, and therein declared positively to expose men to the divine wrath: because so far is it from any act of charity to strengthen the drunkard or the fornicator, the fraudulent or liar, the covetous, the profane, or the careless, by flattering them, or leaving them to flatter themselves that they shall escape for their wickedness, unless they become new creatures, that it is uniting with their invisible adversary the devil, and giving him your aid to delude their souls till they are lost for ever. But besides the multitude of evil actions, dis-

tinguished in Scripture by the name of sins, which go before men to judgment, there is a considerable part of human conduct of a doubtful aspect. Now here is the peculiar province for the exercise of charitable judgment: and in this place, O Christian, you will esteem it your bounden duty, and make it your practice. You will watch over your tongue, to restrain it from condemning men without proofs, or merely upon the slight evidence of a single report. You will be careful to inform yourself of the particular circumstances connected with the action in question: and when no sufficient light appears to justify a peremptory verdict, you will conclude as candour and love direct. Thus in the numberless quarrels between near relations, and in contests about matters of property, it is common to hear violent accusations, which have no foundation, and plausible misrepresentations of each other by both the parties concerned. In the midst of which very few can know any thing with certainty, and therefore all are bound to suspend their judgment, and receive no bias from common fame.

With regard also to the *characters* of men, you will be charitable in your judgment. The commission of a single crime contrary to the tenour of the delinquent's life, you will never cruelly construe into an impeachment of his sincerity. You will not brand a man as an incorrigible villain ever after, because he was once guilty of a dishonest action towards yourself; or proclaim another to be a mere hypocrite in religion, because you have once detected him in some wicked practice. You will not immediately, as the manner of a vindictive man is, cry out, that all professed regard to conscience in such is only cant; or

profession of the fear of God only a snare to entrap the simple, or a cloak to cover iniquity. On the contrary, you will remember how often the violence of temptation, suited to your constitutional sin, has been too mighty for you, or brought you to the very point of yielding. You will call to mind, that the best of men, those whom God himself hath canonized as saints in glory, did not always persevere in the path of duty, without a blemish or a fall; they were overtaken with faults, though they soon abhorred themselves for them, and vanquished for the future their attempts. You will acknowledge it very possible for such frail creatures as men are, in their best state, to make a slip contrary to habitual practice, and acknowledged duty.

Fair evidences therefore of repentance will demand in your opinion a favourable judgment of those who have dishonoured their Christian profession; and lead you to conclude, that inward shame and secret sorrow for their fall, have exceeded all the open reproach which, as backsliders, they have brought upon themselves and religion.

With regard to the *intentions* of men, as in most cases they can with certainty be known to God only, you will esteem it your bounden duty to impute no evil, where it is not manifest, nor dare to allow the injurious surmise that such and such things spring from a bad design, when you have no proof to substantiate the charge.

In these, and in many other similar points, you will exercise a charitable judgment, because the command of your God and Saviour is most plain that you

should. *Judge not*, (that is, in cases where you cannot have a competent knowledge, and where God's law is silent) *that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* Matt. vii. 1, 2.

Your obedience to this command will appear reasonable, and be rendered easy, by a recollection of the treatment which *you* have experienced in similar circumstances. You are conscious how often, when you have acted uprightly, you have been charged with evil intentions. Your own conduct has often been cruelly misconstrued, often condemned as being quite of a different complexion from what you knew it to have been. You remember also how often *you* have done what you ought not, what you promised and vowed you would not: that many prayers, much watchfulness, and obstinate conflicts were scarcely sufficient to gain you an established victory over your own wickedness. You know that when you fell, the fall was instantly lamented; and though in fact wounded grievously, you rose to renew the combat, earnestly striving to obtain deliverance from the power of your adversary. Therefore, though you now may be a conqueror in the fight, you will feel for others in the situation in which you were once yourself: assured, that men may really design the glory of God, and be in general influenced by good-will to their fellow-creatures, though they may sometimes be betrayed into a breach of duty.

Such sentiments deeply impressed on your own heart, will form and establish a habit of judging of your fellow-creatures with tenderness and mercy,

VI. It is a very distinguishing part of the temper of

a Christian, to FORGIVE and LOVE HIS ENEMIES. Therefore, if you are entitled to the name you bear, your behaviour under provocations will be quite opposite to the custom of the world, and the impulse of corrupt nature. Is your character basely vilified? you will refute the malicious slander, should it need an answer, without retaliating abuse for abuse, or blackening your defamers. Should your foes proceed from ill language to ill usage, you will still forgive: and prove the reality of your good-will towards them, by pitying them in their distress, by even serving them as occasion offers. And though in some cases the very grievous wrongs with which you may be oppressed, may justify and demand legal redress, your heart will burn with no animosity against those, whose violence has forced you to this method of self-defence. And, to advance one step higher; were the case ever to happen, that you were left in the power of such persecutors of the Christian faith, as were determined, unless you renounced it, to take away your life; yet, even here, so sublime is the holiness flowing from Christian principles, that you would feel a benevolent compassion towards your persecutors. You would pray for them to that God, before whom it is equally dangerous and impious to dissemble. You would entreat him to give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that their sin might be pardoned, and the joy of heaven finally become their portion.

Thus complete is the nature, and thus wide the extent of the forgiveness and love which you will exercise, O Christian, towards your enemies.

The *arguments* which convince you of the reason-

ableness and absolute necessity of this temper, are, as they need to be, remarkably forcible and impressive. Your *knowledge of God in his government and redemption of the world,* will lead you utterly to condemn and to oppose the first appearances of malice, or of hatred even against your bitterest foes. For you are thoroughly sensible what manner of affronts and insults the great God daily receives. You consider the condition of the persons who offer them, and the obligations they are under to him. You remember the glory of the Most High, the ample means he has in his power instantly to avenge his injured name, and to destroy its daring adversaries in a moment.—At the same time you behold him slow to anger, full of long-suffering, and of great mercy; not willing that any should perish, but waiting for many months, nay many years, in patient compassion towards them that hate him.

This adorable temper in the God of heaven, so conspicuous in his providential government of the world, shines still brighter to your mind in the *plan of man's redemption.* By serious meditation on this scheme, you will be led, O Christian, to reason thus with yourself: "Had God been provoked with *his* enemies, "as I am so impatiently inclined to be with mine; "had he been prone to resentment, or wanting in the "riches of mercy, what had become of us all? of a "world in arms against him? Had God loved those "only who first loved him, or waited to give his ines-"timable blessing, till we sinners had made the first "advance, where had been the means of grace? "where the glad tidings of salvation? God, on the "contrary, commendeth his love to us, *in that when* "*we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.* How inex-

" cusable then, how desperately wicked must it be in " me, to want love for a fellow-servant, though a fel- " low-sinner, since God has had so much compassion " on us all."

Further, The force of this argument in proof of the reasonableness of loving your enemies, is still considerably more increased by *your own experience*, of God's grace and tender mercy to yourself.

You remember how long you lived in forgetfulness and in horrid contempt of God, as if *you* had been independent of him, or *he* unworthy of your notice; how long you were seeking your happiness in the pursuits of vanity, without inquiring, Where is God my Maker? You know he suffered you to survive all this! In the midst of it, his mercy was not estranged from you; he still protected, still provided for you: he preserved you from dying in a reprobate condition. At length he crowned his goodness towards you, by giving you grace to discover the guilt of sin, and the efficacy of a Saviour, by forgiving and forgetting all the evil you had done against him. This very long, this very gracious indulgence of your heavenly Father, manifests the deformity of a vindictive spirit, and enables you to see how horrible it must be in you to listen to its dictates; or not to return love, whatever injuries you have received, when the God of glory both has dealt, and still continues to deal, so graciously with you.

Therefore, though some violent provocations may suddenly kindle resentment, and prompt you to cherish the thought of returning evil for evil, soon the conviction of God's patience and love towards yourself, will make the transient intention appear full of

injustice and ingratitude to God, and totally unbecoming your guilty state before him. Thus the hell-engendered spark of revenge will quickly expire, and love instead of resentment, reign within.

Besides these arguments, the full credit which you, O Christian, give to every Scripture declaration, will dispose you to resist every rising sentiment of ill-will against your enemies. You are assured by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, that no one who harbours the least degree of malice or hatred in his heart, can stand within the limits of mercy till that detestable spirit be subdued. So highly offensive is it to God, whenever found in such guilty sinful creatures as we are, that it renders us incapable even of praying, without increasing our sin: for the tongue which holds any correspondence with a heart envenomed by hatred, does but call for a curse, when it calls upon God in those words which Christ hath taught us, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us:* the man who does not forgive his enemies, calls in these words for justice on himself instead of compassion. The petition, dreadfully inverted, sounds thus in the ears of God, *Forgive* NOT *me my trespasses, as I do not forgive them that trespass against me.* And if any man persist in hatred of his foes, God will answer him according to this true meaning of his prayer.

In such a forcible manner are you taught, O Christian, to forgive and love your enemies. And while these considerations prove to you beyond question, both the reasonableness and the absolute necessity of the duty, the *grace of God* is promised to your prayer, that, what with man is impossible, may, through the Spirit's influence, be accomplished by you. For

though injuries so affect, so irritate our selfish hearts, that it seems an impracticable task to attempt to extinguish animosity towards your foes, yet by the Holy Ghost there is given to every true believer in Christ, *a spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind;* so that, through Christ strengthening him, he can do all things.*

VII. By continuing in the faith of Christ, and growing in his grace, you will at length obtain true HUMILITY, preferring every one before yourself. This indeed is the most exalted attainment of a real Christian. An attainment not barely surpassing what the world thinks requisite to form a complete character, but even appearing to the proud big with absurdity and contradiction. I shall shew therefore in what sense, and on what account, you will prefer every one before yourself, if you are advanced in Christian holiness. You will do this, not because you know yourself to live in the indulgence of sin as much as others; for irresistible evidence compels you to believe the contrary. Neither does this preference which you give to every one before yourself, imply any denial of the real change wrought in your soul by

* What gratitude is due to God for his word which teaches, and for his grace which enables all who receive it to copy his example in that most arduous work of overcoming evil with good! The highest degree of forgiveness to which Plato, the wise and renowned, thought it possible to arrive, was to efface the very idea of his enemy from his mind: thus taking, by such annihilating scorn, a secret but proud revenge. How nobly superior the Christian! he shews the most generous compassion to his bitterest foes: their injuries he forgets, while he remembers their persons with good-will, and is glad to shew them he does so, when occasion offers.

the grace of God; much less does it suppose that you might as well have continued, like the world at large, in servitude to sin. Were it so understood, I should allow the objections made against this part of the Christian temper, by men of superficial virtue and predominant self-conceit. Then indeed it might justly be said, "Is it possible to be so blind as not to perceive the vast difference there is in the characters of men? And if I am allowed to see it in the case of others, how can it be wrong to acknowledge as much with regard to myself? What violence should I offer to my reason, to attempt to persuade myself that I am not to prefer myself to the children of disobedience; I, who pay regard to God and to all his commandments?"

But let the case be properly stated, and then I trust there will appear very sufficient grounds for this humble estimation of yourself.

It is certain then, if you are much advanced in the knowledge and practice of the religion of Jesus, that you are sensible of much corruption in your heart; for to imagine otherwise, is the effect of pride blinding the eyes of the mind. It is certain also, that you are conscious of many instances of unfaithfulness to the grace you have received; that you have to bewail many known omissions, and much negligence in the service of God; and that you cannot but acknowledge your tempers to have been far short of that perfection which the Christian standard requires. At the same time you clearly perceive what excellent advantages you have enjoyed, what mercies have been granted to you, demanding suitable returns of faith, love, and obedience. You remember the alarming calls, the af-

fectionate warnings, which have made strong impressions on your heart; the answers which have been given to your prayers; the troubles, the dangers, the enemies from which you have been delivered; together with the peace, the comfort, and joy you have so often experienced in communion with your God. In a word, you are fully convinced, that much, very much indeed, has been done in order to render you an example of holiness. In this view therefore, every appearance of insensibility towards God; every secret sinful disorder of your affections, which, with many who account themselves religious, passes for nothing, will wear a quite different aspect in your eye—it will afflict and abase you.

Things being thus circumstanced with the humbled and advanced Christian; I would now ask, Where is the palpable absurdity, where the fancied impossibility, that each person of this character should judge himself, all things considered, inferior to other men? or that he should believe there is no other person who, had he been blessed with equal helps and advantages, would not have so adorned the Christian profession as to surpass his own attainments?

The whole difficulty of conceiving that this temper can actually subsist in the heart, arises from the self-conceit so general and abounding, which is puffed up with the least shadow of supposed pre-eminence above others. This hateful disposition it is, which makes men so apt to prefer themselves to others on account of their own goodness, without considering how much more favoured they have been; and without comparing the PROGRESS THEY HAVE MADE WITH THE MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT THEY HAVE ENJOYED.

The advanced Christian is of a more humble and reasonable mind: he blushes at his manifold and great defects; he is ashamed for his faults in the remembrance of the rich grace of God bestowed upon him, and the consideration of the excellency of his majesty. He is too candid to think that others have been guilty in the same degree: the transition then is easy to prefer every one before himself.

Besides this inward testimony, which will lead you, if you are much advanced in the religion of Jesus, to this humble estimation of yourself, the *command* is positive; *In lowliness of mind let each esteem other* BETTER *than themselves.* Philip. ii. 3. A command expressly enjoined, as the only effectual prevention of *vain glory.* And that this admonition is not to be interpreted as relating to those only who walk worthy of their Christian profession, appears evidently from the parable, which our Saviour spoke on purpose to expose the sin of self-preference. He sets before our eyes a Pharisee and a Publican. The former is a man honest, strictly conscientious, and very devout. These his virtues he acknowledges to be the free gifts of God; and he only prefers himself on their account to the wicked and abandoned. One of them he mentions in his prayer, without any personal aversion, merely because he saw him in the temple,* and thanks his God that he was not so wicked and base as this Publican.

* Observe, there could be nothing wrong in the Pharisee's making mention of the Publican's name, but as there was injustice in his *preferring* himself to him; since nothing is more plain, than that he might be allowed to say the thing in his prayers, which he was allowed to say or to think at all other times. But this he was allowed to do, if he might esteem himself above the Publican.

You know the judgment of God in this case. The Pharisee was left in his sins, highly offensive in the eye of his Maker, because he exalted himself above the Publican. *Because,* says our Lord, *he trusted in himself that he was righteous, and despised others,* that is, in comparison of himself.

A fuller proof you cannot desire of the necessity of entertaining the lowest opinion of yourself. This example therefore will lead you, O Christian, to understand, that all who prefer themselves to others, adopt in fact the sentiments of the Pharisee, tread in his steps, and must have done just as he did, had the same thing occurred to them. It will teach you, that as there were none in common repute more wicked than the Publicans; so there are none so wicked, as to justify your placing yourself above them. Hence you will learn to be constantly on your guard against self-complacency as a dangerous though subtle enemy to your soul. You will repel its vile insinuations, to which you will find yourself exposed, whenever you hear of the faults, or see the wickedness of others. You will be jealous lest pride should grow out of the consciousness of what God has done for you; and be afraid of nothing more than the vanity of your own mind: remembering that Truth itself has thrice proclaimed, *He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

From this true representation of the tempers of a Christian towards his fellow-creatures, it is evident that he must prove an inestimable blessing to all in connexion with him. For what a delightful union is found in his heart, of useful and excellent qualities! Who would not rejoice to have that man for his supe-

rior or relation, his neighbour or acquaintance, in whom sincerity and justice, mercy and meekness, candour and universal benevolence, shine with continued lustre? Who must not admire a man habitually exercising all these virtues, yet taking himself the lowest place; not counting himself to have apprehended, not soothing the vanity of his mind by the applause he receives, or by any comparison of himself with others; but doing this one thing, pressing forward, ashamed of his inconsiderable attainments, and sluggish progress. Such is not the ideal picture of what a Christian should be, but the practice of thousands who are living by faith in the Son of God, as their atoning sacrifice and the Lord their righteousness. In fact, every one who has a Scripture title to the character of a Christian, will thus walk in this world, and be thus zealous of good works.*

* See Prayer the *Sixteenth*.

SUNDAY XXVI. CHAPTER XXVI.

On the Duty of a Christian in a Married State.

IN the last Chapter we took a view of the Christian exercising sincerity, justice and mercy, meekness, candour, love, and humility towards all his fellow-creatures. We now come to consider him discharging those peculiar duties which are incumbent upon him *in the married state*.

The *mutual* duties of Christian husbands and wives are those of *fidelity* and *love;* the *separate* duties, *support* and *government,* on the husband's part; on the wife's, *assistance* and *obedience.*

Fidelity is equally enjoined by the matrimonial covenant, on both parties; because by virtue of this union they become each other's property. So that it is not possible for either to violate the nuptial vow, without a crime punishable in every well-ordered society; without annulling the covenant of marriage; without justifying a divorce; without incurring the wrath of Him who hath said, *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

In the eyes of all therefore, who form their sentiments by the Scriptures, adultery is abhorred as the blackest villany. And so far must Christian husbands and wives be from injuring each other by defiling the marriage-bed, that they must abstain from every thing in their air, dress, or discourse, which encourages unchaste desires. Whatever has this tendency, however polite and fashionable, they must shun as a hateful violation of the spirit of their marriage-contract. In their judgment, it must be no sufficient observation of conjugal fidelity barely to be innocent of adulterous commerce; they must maintain a purity of heart undefiled by any lusting after others, and by any lascivious jesting, which discovers at least an appearance of it. Nothing less than this is necessary on the man's part, to keep his marriage vow inviolate, and on the woman's to shew a chaste conversation. A duty equally incumbent on both: and for either to transgress here, is audaciously to rebel against the plain com-

mand of the Lord God Almighty, against his benevolent and everlasting ordinance.

To fidelity must be added *mutual love.* For love is the life of marriage; without which, it differs as much from the comfortable society the gracious God intended to establish by it, as a state of servitude from one of freedom. When this union was first made in Paradise, it was immediately declared, that the bonds of marriage should prove stronger than the bonds of nature; so that a man should *forsake even his father and mother,* from whom he instrumentally derived his being, *and cleave to his wife.*

From hence it follows, that husbands and wives, though irreproachable in point of conjugal fidelity, yet partially violate the nuptial vow if they live in indifference, or slight regard towards each other. It is true, indifference does not, as adultery, break the marriage-bond, but it defeats one principal purpose of its institution. For it was designed to unite the affections of the married pair as much as their persons; and to produce from this intimate union that perfect friendship which ought necessarily to result from it. But, instead of this; want of love in either of the parties will render the married state subversive of the very purposes to which it was expressly designed to minister.

For this reason great stress is laid in *God's holy word* on this duty. Husbands and wives are not only commanded to preserve the bed undefiled, but to maintain also a most affectionate regard for each other. The precept indeed is immediately addressed to husbands, but the force of it must equally reach to both parties engaged in the nuptial union; *So men ought to*

love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephes. v. 28, 29. The sensibility which every man has of the least injury done to his own person, the invincible aversion from every thing painful to it, the incessant desire of preserving it in health and comfort, form the image here used to represent the strength, the delicacy, and the perpetuity of conjugal affection. And as our bodies do not partake less of our care and love, on account of their weakness, deformity, or disease; or because they prove much more burthensome to us, than others, of a healthier habit, find theirs to be; so no disagreeable qualities, no perverse humours on either side, can justify the other party in withholding the tribute of love. These faults indeed will make it more difficult to behave with proper tenderness and affection; but, though severe trials of our faith and patience, they by no means dissolve the obligations of the married state.

This truth is impressively urged on the husband in the conclusion of the precept, by directing him to copy the tender love of the Saviour towards his church, in his own behaviour to his wife. As if it had been said, "You yourself abundantly experience the care "of the Lord Jesus Christ over you, and observe it ex- "ercised over your fellow-christians; you see how he "bears with your negligences and your infirmities, "with many things in themselves blameable and to "him peculiarly distasteful; yet he grows not cold or "indifferent to your welfare, nor rejects you from "among his children. Do you therefore display the

"same tenderness one towards another, as the univer-
"sal church experiences from its Head; learn of Him,
"and the imitation will prevent indifference and in-
"crease love."

Further: Christian husbands and wives must not only preserve inviolate their mutual engagements whether of fidelity or love, but their *conjugal affection* must be *spiritual* also, both in its principle and effects.

It must not be built only on *beauty*: for this is one of the most fleeting things in nature, incapable, even while it lasts, of maintaining its enchanting power. Hence those who come together with rapture, enamoured with each other's person, often grow cold, and become distasteful to one another. At least there can be no security that this will not sooner or later be the consequence, when the cause of love is so superficial.

But suppose that *good sense, good manners,* or the appearance of a *temper formed for the dearest friendship,* should engage the parties in a married union; even these amiable accomplishments, without divine grace, may leave them in great danger of estrangement from each other: for these excellencies do not subdue either pride, or a love of independence, or of the world. Husbands and wives therefore, who have no better foundation for their love than these charms, with which they were at first struck; by finding more restraint in the marriage state than was expected, or less reality of amiable tempers, often in fact lose the love they had when they first came together; especially where the bitterness of misfortune produces a change in worldly circumstances. It is too frequen

to see the well-bred, the sensible, the amiable husband or wife, changed by the loss of fortune into a fretful, complaining, irksome companion. Indeed, the reason why this is not the case much oftener, is owing to the providence of God, which keeps men out of those trials they are not strong enough to bear.

The affection of Christian husbands and wives must be established upon a firmer basis. The husband must love his wife, not only for the charms of her person, the sweetness of her manners, or even the affection he knows she bears him; but, above all, because their supreme Benefactor, the Lord of heaven and earth hath said, *Husbands, love your wives.* The Christian wife must also love her husband principally in obedience to the divine will; not on account of the superiority of his understanding, the applause he receives, the honour of his condition, or the cordiality of his affections towards herself. For if conjugal love be not secured by conscience towards God, a thousand various accidents may make that union miserable which was happy before. Some sudden storm of contention may arise, violent enough to tear up natural affection by the roots. Some bitter expression may escape in the heat of passion, which shall eat in secret as a canker, and destroy all confidence and peace.

Husbands and wives, on the contrary, in whose hearts the love and authority of God reign, will be united together by the common object of their highest adoration and all-sufficient happiness; they will find their affection, like the law of their God, which has bound them in so close an alliance, constant and unalterable.

And as the principle of affection between Christian husbands and wives must be spiritual, so must the various *effects* of it too. To be solicitous to procure a comfortable provision for a wife; to abhor the thought of leaving her in distress or dependence, when diligence or frugality may prevent it, is common to *every* married man, who is not sunk beneath the level of humanity. In like manner, for the wife diligently and discreetly to manage her husband's family, cheerfully to join in every thing for their common good, attentively to study to make his life and home agreeable to him, is an expression of affection which may subsist in a heart altogether void of the least savour of Christianity. Mutual and earnest endeavours to be pleasing to each other, are often found, where the parties can see and hear each other do a thousand things in open defiance of God's authority: and where, instead of disapproving silence, and meek remonstrance on either side, they remain perfectly well satisfied with each other. A most perfidious kind of love is this, though every where prevalent; a ruinous confederacy against the cause of God and truth, in which they encourage and strengthen one another, and are the principal instruments of each other's everlasting condemnation.

In a manner totally different from this, must the affection, which *Christian* husbands and wives bear towards each other, display itself. They must be most concerned for each other's *spiritual welfare:* they must be kind and tender-hearted inspectors of each other's conduct, meekly pointing out errors, and with love admonishing for faults, which otherwise would have escaped notice. They must converse together of the

power, the glory, the mightiness of God's kingdom, to kindle and increase their mutual love towards him. They must prompt each other to holy vigilance, and a frequent use of the means of grace: they must associate chiefly with that sort of company which tends to increase carefulness for the soul, faith in Jesus, love to God, and all the graces of a Christian life. As the nuptial union gives each of the parties much influence, which may prove either greatly serviceable or terribly hurtful to each other's everlasting interests, they must look upon themselves as bound in conscience to use it all, against the corruptions of the heart, against pride, unbelief, and worldly lusts.

In this manner, with unspeakable advantage and delight, Christian husbands and wives prove the spiritual nature of their conjugal affection; and then they will be sure to find it equally constant in youth and age, sickness and health, indigence and plenty, lasting as their abode together in this world, and redounding to their advancement in glory in that which is eternal.

Now real Christians are the only persons capable of dwelling together in the mutual exercise of such spiritual and permanent affection; because they alone confess their own innate depravity in the sight of God; and, under this humbling sense of themselves, use the means of grace aright. They alone are constant and persevering in prayer, for daily remission of each other's sins; for the Holy Ghost to help each other's infirmities, and to grant daily supplies of strength against temptation.

These humble exercises of heart prove a fruitful source of mutual endearment. They deeply impress

each party with a sense that they are connected by ties far more noble even than those of wedlock; that they are children of one heavenly Father, servants of one gracious Lord, members of one body, and heirs of one glorious kingdom. The practical knowledge of these inestimable privileges, and of a common interest in them, has power to unite, even at the first interview, those who were *strangers* to each other's persons. Judge then how much more effectual this knowledge, when increased and enlightened by daily prayer, must be to prevent coldness and alienation of love in those, who are *already united* in fervent affection!

Again; it is *satiety* which often proves the bane of conjugal affection. The parties by long acquaintance grow insipid to each other: the husband grows more reserved, or the wife loses her vivacity; in either case disregard ensues. But the spiritual course in which believers in Jesus are engaged, prevents this satiety: the infinite grandeur of the objects of their common faith, the importance of their nuptial union with respect to them, joined to a mutual desire of obtaining salvation, will not suffer that stagnation to take place in the married state, in which otherwise it is so frequently found to settle.

Further: *Strife* and *contention* first cool, and then destroy, all conjugal affection. But the devout exercises in which the faithful in Christ Jesus are employed, are of great efficacy to prevent variance; or when in any measure it happens, to heal it. For when they appear before God, seeing and lamenting their own defects, renouncing themselves, and praying that their repeated offences may not be imputed to them, but remitted for the sake of Jesus, how easy will they find

it to confess their own proneness to passion, to make merciful allowances for each other, and to divide the blame instead of imputing it wholly to one side, after the manner of pride and self-sufficiency! By these concessions the contention will end in mutual self-condemnation and in earnest desire of greater vigilance against any disagreement in future.

Though the height and ardour therefore of natural love which usually precede the nuptial union, and flourish after it for a time, may wear off and subside; husbands and wives who are united in Christian knowledge and principles, may be certain that a solid tender affection will ever remain; an affection far more exalted, sufficient to produce all the happiness the marriage state was intended to afford, and ripening more and more as they grow in grace and every divine attainment.

Besides mutual fidelity and love, which are branches of duty common to *both* parties in the married state, there are some also *peculiar to the husband, others to the wife;* and the conscientious discharge of these respectively, will be regarded as a matter of strict duty by the faithful in Christ Jesus.

The peculiar province of the HUSBAND is to *govern; For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.* Ephes. v. 23. Therefore, when the husband ceases to preside, giving up without just reason the authority to the wife, he transgresses no less than an officer in an army would do, who surrendered the honour of his command to the importunity and ambition of an inferior. But then, as the head has no interest of its own, distinct from the rest of the body, nor any advantage over the other parts (unless

the care of directing and providing for them be deemed an advantage) so the husband hath no interest separate from his wife, nor any private advantage flowing from his superiority. For the authority intrusted with the husband by Almighty God is designed for the direction, the preservation, and well-being of the wife, and therefore can never be exercised by any husband, who fears God, but with this view, and to this excellent end: not with such arbitrary power as men rule their slaves, but with such a benign influence as the soul exerts over the body, presiding over and governing it; for the command, in the Christian rule of conduct is, that *husbands dwell with* their wives *according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel.* 1 Pet. iii. 7. that is, making the superiority which God hath ordained and given them, a reason, not of insolence and abuse, but of indulgent tenderness. So that the authority lodged in the husband, by being managed with propriety, instead of proving a galling yoke to the wife, shall be found a real source of greater ease and happiness to both.

Another peculiar branch of the husband's duty to his wife, is to *provide* her with all things necessary, convenient, and comfortable, according to his own rank and condition of life. He must express a pleasure in letting her share in all the advantages he possesses, and by evident marks of joy convince her, that he is made happy by seeing her use, within the limits which God has prescribed, all the worldly accommodations he enjoys. And though conjugal affection renders any command to the husband to communicate in his joys with his wife less needful, it is still necessarily included in that sacred injunction, *So ought men to*

love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it. Ephes. v. 28, 29.

The *peculiar duty* of the Christian WIFE, and which for conscience towards God she will observe, is to give aid and comfort to her husband in the midst of his business and labour. The good management of a family is a thing quite different from making a provision for the support of it. The former, in general, depends chiefly on the wife; the latter is the husband's province. In this manner the labour of life is divided, and if either neglect their respective duty, much confusion may be expected, which it was one design of the nuptial union to prevent. A Christian wife therefore, instead of affecting to be above the care of a family, as if she were made only to dress, visit, and be admired, like a statue or a picture, for her shape or face, will carefully superintend her household, and eat not the bread of idleness. Thus will she give her husband a solid testimony of her regard for him, by being careful to see that the fruit of his labour, or his income, is not wasted through extravagance, or consumed for want of female inspection and order at home.

A second instance of duty peculiar to the wife, is *obedience* to the will of her husband. When Eve, the mother of the human race, sinned through a vain desire of knowledge, the most holy God was pleased to punish that vanity with a disappointment of the very end at which it aimed, by making that desire of pre-eminence a reason of her subjection. It pleased God therefore to declare that from thence forward her de-

sires should be referred to the will of her husband, either to reject or comply with them in things lawful, as he thought proper: *And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.* Gen. iii. 16.

It is therefore nothing less than an open resistance of the ordinance of God; it is nothing less than a proud self-exalting contempt of the word of God, in a wife to affect to rule, or to refuse to submit to the authority of her husband. For this submission is ordained of God, even from the fall of man; and is confirmed again by the following command of the inspired apostle; *As the church is subject to Christ,* acknowledging his power, and submitting to his authority, though contrary to natural inclination, *so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.* Ephes. vi. 24. The plain meaning is, that in every instance, where the command of the husband does not interfere with duty to God, the wife is obliged to comply, and give up her own will without murmuring.

If it be urged, that the wife has frequently more understanding and ability to govern than the husband, and therefore on this account may think herself excused from paying obedience and living in subjection, the answer is obvious: she has liberty to use her superior wisdom in giving counsel, in producing such strong reasons as are proper to correct a mistaken judgment, and persuade to a change of sentiment or conduct. But if the force of her persuasions prove ineffectual, subjection is her wisely appointed duty. Indeed, if more than the liberty to advise were allowed on account of greater talents, it must follow that authority is founded upon the superiority of intellectual endowments; a notion big with confusion and

ruin to society. For suppose a servant endued with more capacity and grace too (as often is the case) than his master; still, how insolent, how insupportable would it appear, should this be urged as a reason for his refusing to be under the control, to which it was indisputably his duty to submit on another account; indisputably his duty, because though allowed to be superior in understanding, he is inferior in station. To attempt therefore to gain the place of authority, or contend for it on account of gifts and parts, is to abuse them to the subverting that order, which the sovereign Giver of them has himself established. The Christian rule is positive against such usurpation. It speaks thus: *Let the wife see that she reverence her husband;* that is, in opposition to the violent pride and selfishness of human nature, let her with carefulness watch her own heart, that she may not be found wanting in submission to him; for if she be, her deportment is most unbecoming a woman professing godliness. Let her look through her husband to God the author of the marriage union, and habitually call to mind the holy appointment so plainly made known in his word.

It is a case which too frequently happens, that *one party is brought to the knowledge of God and Christ Jesus*, while the other remains in natural unbelief and bitter prejudice against the power of godliness. Here much of the comfort of the nuptial union must be prevented: here, instead of animating and assisting each other in their best interests, the believing husband or wife must necessarily experience much dissatisfaction, and even affliction in the vain company, the foolish discourse, the favourite pleasures, and the low pur-

suits, in which only the unconverted party can delight. Yet in these trying circumstances, the power of Christian faith will display itself to great advantage. It will produce a persevering meekness, and patient waiting in love, if God, peradventure, shall give repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. It will excite to greater circumspection in adorning the Gospel, so that the mind disaffected to God and his great salvation may be won over even without the word. It will provoke to earnest intercession with God to crown his loving-kindness by making both one spirit in the Lord, who are already united by the marriage tie.*

* See Prayer the *Seventeenth.*

SUNDAY XXVII. CHAPTER XXVII.

The Duty of Parents towards their Children.

THE nearest connection in life after the nuptial union is that which subsists between PARENTS and their CHILDREN. From this connexion arise various duties, both of a temporal and spiritual kind, to the discharge of which every Christian will conscientiously attend.

I. It is a duty all PARENTS owe their children to accustom them to an early habit of *industry*, and to inspire them with an abhorrence of idleness, as the great corrupter of the human mind and inlet to every vice.

The *poor* must strongly insist upon their children's giving themselves diligently to work, not only as necessary to procure themselves bread, but as the means of preventing temptations to pilfering and theft, and keeping them from infamy and an ignominious death. The children of the *rich* stand in no less need of being excited to industrious application of their time and talents. From their earliest years they should hear that neither opulence nor nobility of birth, can preserve them from being despicable, and noxious to society, if they take no pains to acquire what will improve the mind, and give them ability to perform their duty; that without love of employment suited to their station, like truant school-boys, they must seek men as idle as themselves for their companions; and, to kill time, must be eager in the pursuit of foolish and puerile amusements; and even be tempted to sink into meanness and the wickedness of a debauched life, merely to free themselves from the languor and misery of sloth. On the contrary, that by cultivating their understandings by scientific and literary pursuits, by being active and useful, by improving their advantages of station, they will never feel time a burden on their hands. They will always be doing good, and be honourable in their generation. These instructions, enforced by the example of the conduct they inculcate, will operate as a powerful antidote to the intoxicating pride which wealth and grandeur naturally inspire. *Enforced,* I say, *by the example of the conduct* they inculcate; for if the persons who give these instructions violate them, they can have no effect. Children must necessarily believe that their parents judge that to be the way of happiness in which they

see them continually walk, because they do it out of choice; and if they did not think it best, why should they choose it? As it would therefore appear cruel in parents to correct or reprove tempers and practices their children learn from themselves, so it would be absurd to expect that precept or reproof should profit them, when the persons from whom they come, are not themselves acting under their influence.

II. It is the duty of parents *to make a provision for their children,* sufficient, if they can, to enable them, by honest industry, or some liberal profession, to support themselves, and be useful members of society. For what can be more contrary to the feelings of parental love, than, by idleness or extravagance, to expose their offspring to poverty, or to force them to settle in a station of life much beneath that in which they were born, a cause frequently of much vexation to them, and a bitter disappointment which few are able to bear. But with regard to what may properly be called a provision, reason, not fashion; the word of God, not blind affection, must determine. When persons who were born to no estate, think it incumbent on them to amass wealth sufficient to raise their children above the need of any employment or profession, scanty must be their charities, and strong their love of money. And so far is opulence from being any real benefit to children, that (a few instances excepted) it proves a corrupter of their hearts, a pander to their lusts, fixing them in habits of vanity, extravagance, and luxury.

III. But the duty which, above all others, is incumbent on parents, is *to provide,* as far as lies in them, *for the spiritual and everlasting welfare of their offspring.*

And here let me request the most serious attention of every parent. I am at a loss for words strong enough to describe the importance of this duty. Parents ought to consider themselves as chiefly living for the proper discharge of it, and as in the most solemn manner accountable to God for their conduct herein. Let them attend to the many and strong obligations by which they are bound to the performance of it.

First, This is clearly the *command of God: These words,* saith he, *which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* Deut. vi. 6, 7. *He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.* Psalm lxxviii. 5—7. The New Testament enforces the same duty, and calls upon fathers to bring up their children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Ephes. vi. 4.

Secondly, This command of God is solemnly acknowledged by *the covenant* into which professing Christians enter their children. Almost as soon as they have received them from God, they vow, in the ordinance of baptism, to educate them in the service, and for the honour of their Maker and Redeemer. Or if they do not appear themselves as sponsors for their

own children, they make choice of some particular friends, who engage to see their children properly instructed. Unless therefore these parents are careful to do for their children what was then promised in their behalf, they turn the solemn religious rite, which claims God our Saviour for its Author, into an idle ceremony.

Thirdly, *Natural affection* should influence Christian parents to be solicitous for the salvation of their children. That they know they have immortal souls is taken for granted; therefore if they neglect the cultivation and improvement of them, anxious only to heap up wealth, to provide them with temporal subsistence, this is but a brutish fondness, not a rational, much less a Christian, kind of love. A rational, a Christian affection for children, must make parents reason thus about them;

"These tender plants, sprung from our own bodies, "are endued with an immortal spirit: they possess a "capacity of serving, loving, and enjoying the favour "of the blessed God for ever. And if they do not "serve, love, and enjoy him for ever, their being, "instead of a blessing, will prove an insupportable "curse. We, their parents, feel such love for them, "as impels us to think no pains too great to provide "for their present comfort. But what avails it to se- "cure them, were we able, from the evils of transient "sickness, pain, and poverty, if woes of endless du- "ration are to be their final portion? What avails "the most ardent affection, which reaches only to the "mortal part, if all that lieth in our power is not "done, that after their passage through the present

"short-lived scene, they may enter into eternity in "the favour of God?"

A small degree of natural affection, where there is persuasion of the certainty of another world, must excite such reasoning as this in the breasts of parents, and be followed with some correspondent care in the education of their offspring.

But those parents, who are in truth what they profess to be, Christians, have a clear view by faith of the realities of the invisible world. Of those realities they feel the unspeakable importance, and such is their love to God, that, were it in their power to accomplish what they wish, there would not remain one rebel upon the face of the earth, one slave to sin. They are grieved to see any perishing, while Jesus, mighty to save, and merciful to pardon, stands ready with open arms to receive all who will come to him for life. With what greater force then must these principles and sentiments work in them toward their own offspring! How solicitous, how active must they be, to secure their spiritual welfare!

Fourthly, The *aptitude of children to receive either good or bad impressions,* which can scarcely afterwards be effaced, forms another powerful argument for instructing them with the utmost care in the knowledge of God. Should this noble opportunity to adorn their minds with excellent sentiments, and to furnish them with just notions, be lost, all future methods of instruction or means of grace are likely to be without effect. For children very soon and very justly conclude, that whatever their parents inculcate with seriousness and frequency, *must* be worthy of their re-

membrance; and, on the contrary, that the things which they have never or very seldom taught them, must be of little or no advantage to their happiness. Hence young people, who have never been instructed at home in the nature of the excellent majesty of the Lord our God; of our absolute dependence upon him, and of his unwearied mercy towards us, attend the public worship of his name with most offensive levity and profaneness. What mere babbling also must their secret prayers be (if they are directed to pray at all) if they have never been instructed in the nature and qualities of sin, never been taught the worth of the soul, or the weakness and depravity of men, on which is founded the necessity of prayer and the aids of grace! What an invincible obstacle, humanly speaking, to the success of the minister of the Gospel must be found in the hearts of young people, whose natural ignorance, pride, and unbelief, like poisonous plants, have been nourished by their parents' principles, or suffered to strengthen by their criminal neglect! Nay, even the calls of God by the voice of his providence, by the death of relations, by misfortunes, and afflictions in the family, are likely to lose their intended benefit, where no care has been taken to teach children, that these are monitors from God to lead men to consider their ways and repent of their transgressions.

It is true (blessed be the free grace of God, and the power of his Spirit) that children who were utterly neglected, and even become depraved through their parents' neglect, have been and are brought daily to the knowledge of salvation by Christ. Nevertheless, it is certain that the prevalence both of empty formality and open profaneness is in a great measure owing

to parents neglecting their duty to their children, and by them it must be answered for. And this suggests another reason,

Fifthly, which should engage parents to care for the salvation of their children; namely this, that *God takes particular notice* of their behaviour in this matter. Abraham, the father of the faithful and friend of God, stands greatly distinguished on this very account: *And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and a mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him.* Other shining excellencies in Abraham might have been mentioned: but the Lord God, you observe, selects and holds forth to our notice, as a peculiar excellency in which he delighted, and names it in conjunction with the inestimable promise of the Saviour, that Abraham would above all things regard the salvation of his children, and the honour of God in his family.

On the other hand, how awfully does the Scripture represent the indignation of the Almighty against the negligence of parents with respect to their children's spiritual welfare! Behold he doth a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it tingle. The aged Eli, though piously disposed himself, yet because his sons *made themselves vile, and he restrained them not;* because he mildly admonished, when he should have rebuked with all severity; expressed only his disapprobation of their conduct, when he should have threatened them at their peril to persist,

and upon their obstinacy have delivered them up to the punishment of the law—for this neglect he is branded as in some degree an accessary to their iniquity; he is charged with *kicking at the sacrifice of God,* and *honouring his sons above him.* He must hear the doom of his family, that they should be cut off from the altar, and that the iniquity of his house should not be purged. *For them that honour me,* saith the Lord God, *I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* 1 Sam. ii. 30. From both these instances, judge how much it is the duty and interest of parents to be very diligent in training up their children in the knowledge and love of God.

Sixthly, The *state of children, exposed to the most alarming dangers,* loudly calls upon parents to be solicitous for their salvation. Their case demands compassion, for they are wholly distempered. How much grief, anger, and vexation do you see them feel, even in their very childhood, from their natural stubbornness, passion, envy, pride, and selfishness! And do you not know what these disorders portend? What greater troubles, what severer conflicts, what more frequent vexations await them as their certain portion, unless the strength of these baleful passions be subdued! Are you not conscious what latent seeds of various lusts are to be found in their hearts, which will ripen by time and occasion to a terrible harvest of corruption, unless prevented by you? Can you think of this, and be negligent or dilatory in commending their case to the great Physician of souls, and teaching them how much they need, and ought to seek for, his power to heal them?

Were a parent to leave his child alone in wilds fre-

quented by beasts of prey, would not his scandalous negligence or wanton barbarity shock every humane heart? But do you act a better part, O parent, if you leave your child to walk through this world, filled with seducing objects, infested with a subtle watchful adversary, and lying in wickedness—to walk through such a world, without the light of faith, the defence of God, the influences of his Spirit; ignorant of the principles of justice, truth, sobriety, chastity, and a Christian life; by what strength they are to be practised; why they are so absolutely required; and what the irreparable misery of violating these holy duties? A young man or woman entering upon the stage of life, ignorant of these things, is like a child deserted by its unnatural parent in the howling wilderness, and is not more likely to escape destruction.

Again, were you content, O parent! to see your child hastening to poverty, to a jail, and an infamous death, without using every method to reclaim him, what words could express your guilt? Be not then deceived: you are in effect so guilty, while you are negligent about his spiritual welfare. For go now, and inquire of poor imprisoned debtors, what deprived them of the sweets of liberty, and their family and society of the benefit of their labour; the answer in general from that place of wretchedness would be this: "Not the cruel rigour of our creditors towards us; "not any unavoidable losses in trade, but early vice "and headstrong passions, never controled in our "education by religious instructions, never disciplined "by the fear of God, brought us to this disgraceful si-"tuation. Our parents were the first, and the most

" effectual instruments of our ruin. Some of them " live to see it; and groan under the conviction of " this heart-breaking truth. Amidst all the other in- " stances of their affection, the grand one still was " wanting, to give conscience authority, by teaching " us the word of God. This would have made us " tremble at those sins which have destroyed our pos- " sessions, our peace, and our character."

Consider, O ye parents, how such an accusation would be borne by any of you from the mouths of those who were intrusted by God to your care, that you might early instil into their minds the important principles of the Christian faith, and guide them into the paths of righteousness.

But should there be any parents so hardened in profaneness, as not to care what may become of their offspring hereafter, provided they escape poverty, and prosper in this world; let them know and hear once more, whether they will attend to the awful truth or no, that there is a day coming, when they will see that their relation to their children was constituted for far higher purposes than to secure them advantages in this world, or to keep them from its misfortunes. Then how insupportable will it be to them to hear their own children calling out for justice on them, imputing their damnation, in a great measure, to their cruelty. They kept the dreadful danger out of sight, they suffered their passions to rule, they joined in extolling pleasure, riches, honour, and power; but never exposed the mischief, infamy, and ruin, inseparable from obstinate disobedience to God. How insufferable the anguish, when children, with bitter imprecations, will rage against their father and mother, and

curse the day in which they were born to them, born finally to aggravate their misery, by perishing together with them!

The united force therefore of these various obligations, and these heart-affecting considerations must make all Christian parents active and solicitous above every thing to do what lies in their power, as instruments, to prepare their offspring to receive the truth of God to the saving of their souls, and to use those methods in which they may expect his grace to work with them, and give them the desired efficacy.*

* See Prayer the *Seventeenth.*

SUNDAY XXVIII. CHAPTER XXVIII.

On the Method of instructing Children.

THE duty of Christian parents to instruct their children in the knowledge of God and Christ has been laid before you. But as the conditions and capacities of men are very different, it is accordingly the duty of some, and what God will undoubtedly require at their hands, to bestow much more pains in this matter, and to use a greater variety of methods with their children, than others.

The POOR will discharge their duty to their children by correcting them from their early childhood for lying, for pilfering, even in the smallest degree, for

swearing, for quarrelling, and for every mark of a cruel disposition—by frequently declaring to them that it is a good and gracious God who gives their parents strength to provide food for their offspring: that he is their Maker, whose eye is ever over all; that he will give unto every one according to his doings, when he shall call the whole world before his tribunal: that this glorious God will ever bless, love, and comfort those that fear and love him; but punish with inconceivable pains all wicked and ungodly persons, who do the things, and live in the tempers, which he hates.

The poor who fear God themselves, have it farther in their power to make their children pray morning and evening—to tell them that the Bible is the word of God, which they must believe and love; to carry them to church on the Lord's-day, and to keep them from profaning that day. And when these things are enforced by a good example, there is little doubt but the children of the poor will be greatly blessed, and, generally speaking, tread in the steps of their godly and excellent parents. And where so much time must be employed in hard labour, and the understanding can be so little improved, this may justly, I apprehend, be deemed a conscientious discharge of their duty towards their children while they are young.

But when years have ripened the minds of their offspring, all that believe in Jesus, however poor, will delight to enlarge their instructions. They will tell them that their own guilty consciences never found peace, till they depended on the atoning blood of Jesus shed on the cross, and pleaded that alone for their pardon before God: that they obtained deliverance

from their strongest sins only by praying for the power and presence of God's Spirit: that they have been kept in peace from worldly fears, and from anxiety for a subsistence, by casting all their care upon God reconciled to them in his dear Son.

In the middle ranks of life, where superior education has better qualified parents, and leisure has made them capable of taking more pains with their children, it is certainly their duty to go far beyond the poor in this important matter. They must therefore not only use the same care as the poor in all the things already mentioned, by impressing them with a regard for truth, justice, and mercy; but study also the most probable methods of making divine knowledge pleasant to the souls of their children. *A successful method of doing this,* I apprehend, will be to watch the opportunities when outward things and particular providences will afford illustration and give efficacy to religious instruction, Now this, by a proper attention, may be done by parents in so great a variety of instances, as to take in all the particular branches of divine knowledge, in which children should be established.

To explain myself at large; the first thing in which all children should be thoroughly instructed, is that *God is good* and gracious, and that the earth is full of his goodness. To give force to this truth, which you must be often inculcating upon your children, point out to them, *in the Spring, and Summer,* when the whole country is arrayed in all its beauty, what their eyes attest, the wide-extended bounty of God; tell them, they are *his* clouds which drop fatness; that it is *his* sun which imparts its genial warmth to make the

ground fruitful; that *he* causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, and bread to strengthen man's heart, and oil and wine to make him of a cheerful countenance; that could they see the bounty of God in its whole extent, they would see innumerable millions of creatures in heaven above, in earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, sustained by his daily, his perpetual communications of good. *In Autumn*, when the fields stand thick with shocks of corn, and the trees bend under their load of fruit; amidst this delightful scene, draw aside the veil of ignorance, and fix their attention upon God, as the invisible yet only cause of all the plenty and beneficence around them. *In Winter* you will have frequent opportunities of bringing the elements to bear witness to the glory of their Maker. In this dreary season of the year, when frost has made the earth as iron, and congealed the flowing streams into solid ice, lead your children to observe how passive the whole creation is, in the hand of its eternal Maker. When the cold is so intense as to become in some degree distressing, and its continuance would prove hurtful, then observe to them how instantly he changes the scene; he bloweth with his wind, and the waters flow again. At another time, when the *deep snow* falls, and covers every object with its fleeces; teach them how suddenly at his word it totally disappears, having answered the purpose for which it was sent.

Pursuing the same method, when you have told your children of the power of God, and what a dreadful thing it is to have him their enemy, repeat the instruction just after his *thunder* has shaken your dwell-

ing, and the arrows of his *lightning* have glared before their eyes; or just after the tempestuous *wind* has left in the neighbourhood some traces of its fury. That is the time to assure them that fire and vapour, snow and hail, storm and tempest, wild and outrageous as they seem to us, move only as and where God appoints their course, with infinitely more exactness than the best disciplined troops obey the orders of their general; and that though the earth should be moved, and the hills be carried into the midst of the sea, the Lord of hosts is with his obedient people, and the God of Jacob is their Refuge.

Thus by pointing out to your children the invisible God as the Cause of all these phenomena, and by furnishing their minds with those sublime Scriptures, in which he asserts his entire and absolute dominion over the elements of fire, water, earth, and air; you will make *the creation a school of instruction* to them. By this manner of teaching you will give a body and substance to the truth, which otherwise is too abstracted for their clear apprehension. Lectures of this kind, repeated not too frequently, (lest they should surfeit children, a thing greatly to be guarded against,) but at such intervals as these various appearances occur, will easily teach your children to adore their great Creator, and impress them with a sense of his presence and agency in every place. Thus, in the most rational manner, and in obedience to your Maker's command, you will talk of him, and his works, and truth, *when you go out, and when you come in, when you sit down, and when you rise up.*

Another truth of the last importance, which young children are capable of being taught, is, that *health*

and strength are the gifts of God. This you must frequently assure them is the truth. But more effectually to realize the truth, watch some opportunity, and regard it as the noblest employ, to carry them to the bed of a brother, a sister, or play-fellow, who is sick and in pain. Immediately after the visit, take them aside to tell them you waited for this opportunity to persuade them of the truth of what you have often taught them, that it is God *who maketh sick and maketh well:* that it is owing to his sovereign infinitely wise appointment, that some are on a bed of languishing, crying out through strong pain; others decked with health, and smiling with joy; and conclude with observing how thankful you are to God, that *they* are still preserved by him in strength. The very same instruction will come also with a still more powerful application, when brought to their remembrance upon their own feeling the blessing of ease after the smart of pain.

It is of great consequence also early to teach your children that *life and death*, as well as sickness and pain, are at the supreme disposal of God. The proper season to rivet this instruction, is when a servant, a friend, or neighbour known to your children, is just expired, and the awful report is brought to their ears. Then the circumstances of the deceased immediately before death, the medicines used, the help of physicians, the sorrows, sighs, and tears of friends and relations, are to be urged as sensible proofs that it is God that taketh away our breath in infancy, youth, or riper years, just as he sees fit, and that none can deliver out of his hand.

At the same time especially, you should be careful

to instruct your children what is meant by the news just brought to their ears, *Such a one is dead.* Then assure them that *to die,* is to pass out of a changing world into one unchangeable: that it is the separation of an immortal soul from a corruptible body, to be happy or miserable in an extreme degree, according to the conduct pursued in this life: that to every proud, every wicked, every unbelieving man or woman, whether rich or poor, a king or a beggar, death is the beginning of endless sorrow; but to every one who has loved God, and lived and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, death is the door to endless joys, and the perfection of glory.

And if it should please God ever to bring your own children to the brink of the grave, and yet restore them again to your arms, it would be a very criminal neglect in you to omit telling them, that you hung over their bed with tears, and felt for their pains, but could give them no ease; that you made your prayer to God, and by his power alone they were relieved and made whole. Suppose also, that either of you their parents has been recovered from the borders of death, and brought again with joy to see your offspring, that is the season to impress them with the truth, that God is the Lord of life and death; that it is he, who in tender mercy hath spared you still to be the guide of their youth.

All these methods of instruction should have been used, all these religious truths you ought to have inculcated upon your children *before* they have exceeded the age of twelve or fourteen. *After* this period, generally speaking, they are capable of being reasoned with; capable of perceiving the force of all those

fundamental arguments, upon which a godly and Christian life is supported against all opposition from without or within. Now their faculties are strong enough to receive those important doctrines, which before they were scarcely able to understand. The duty of parents therefore now requires them to proceed in inculcating Christian principles; in representing to them the excellency and absolute necessity of loving God, and delighting in his word and service; the sin of being peevish and discontented, passionate and proud, envious or revengeful, lewd, worldly, or covetous.

By this time your children will have committed so many faults, have been so often corrected, or reproved for them, and only restrained, contrary to natural inclination, from committing many more and greater; that you will have various striking proofs to convince them, that they are creatures *corrupted in their nature,* disaffected to the government and will of the glorious God, and full of vile propensities. Now shew the Scripture character of fallen man; produce that awful passage, *Yea also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live.* Eccles. ix. 3. And that parallel to it, *We all like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.* Isai. liii. 6. In full confirmation that *their* depravity is such as is here set forth, you may tell them what pains, what correction, what restraints you have been using with them from their very infancy, on account of their faults, to conquer their evil tempers, and to inspire them with love to God and man; and then appeal to their consciences, whether they do not find contrary tempers still rising and

getting the mastery within, though they dare not suffer them to break out? While you are thus unanswerably proving their innate corruption, it is however your duty to do it with tender expressions of love, lest by seeming to upbraid, pride and prejudice should be excited.

The use you are immediately to make of this discovery, is to prove to them the great need of *the Redeemer's interposition* and merits. For, after having fixed a conviction upon their consciences, that they have often knowingly done what God has forbidden, what their own hearts condemned them for, and that they have even taken pleasure therein—after proving that complication of injustice, ingratitude, and rebellion, which has been in their conduct towards God, you may draw with great force this important conclusion, that it did not become him, by whom are all things, to pardon and receive into his favour such sinful creatures, without an atonement; without some sufficient and everlasting demonstration of his infinite abhorrence of their sin, while he was shewing an astonishing degree of love for their persons—that without shedding of blood there could be no remission; nor any other way for the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God to act harmoniously in the salvation of sinners but through Jesus Christ—and that it is upon account of what Jesus did and suffered that they have been spared, and never yet punished, as their provocations deserved.

Now also is the time to bring to their mind the great doctrines which the Scriptures reveal; that the Redeemer, who was in the form of God, and thought

it no robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant, and died on a cross to the end that all who believe in him might be pardoned, sanctified, and saved. From this it will be easy to observe further to your children, that no morality, no religion, (where the Gospel is known) can be acceptable to him, however applauded and extolled by men, but that which is exercised in an entire dependence upon Jesus Christ, which proceeds out of a believing humble heart, and consists in a constant exercise of all those tempers towards the world, our fellow-creatures, and our God, which were in Christ Jesus.

One point more with respect to Scripture doctrines, which your children are now very capable of being taught, is, *their weakness and inability* to live up to what the law of God justly requires. You may observe to them how often they have been breaking their resolutions, acting against their convictions, sorry for doing amiss, wishing and striving in their own fancied power to make themselves better, yet still defeated, still only the more entangled, vexed, and guilty in their own eyes. Tell them that this must ever be the case if they ask not for the Spirit of God, if they place not their trust wholly in his power and influence: acquaint them that God knowing our weakness has promised this Spirit, and commanded us to implore his continual aid and guidance. Desire them to make the experiment for themselves; to have done with placing confidence in their vows, promises, and good resolutions; and to pray, as creatures without strength and utterly depraved, for the Spirit of God to work effectually in them: and conclude with assuring them, that in this very manner you yourselves im-

plore that divine grace which alone enables you to lead a Christian life. And that whatever conformity to the will of God they see in your own behaviour towards themselves or others, is wholly owing, not to any goodness of yours, but to the grace of God which is in you.

Other methods of forming their children after the Scripture model, may be used by parents, who have much leisure and a good understanding, when their offspring grow up to a state of manhood. At this season of life it will be of excellent use to inform them that the unhappy creatures, whose crimes are made public, and whose persons are doomed to an ignominious death, were very early the despisers of God's word, his Son, and his grace; wherefore they were left to themselves, and their sin soon acquired that strength which finally plunged them into ruin. Help them to trace the gay, pleasure-loving young woman from her first contempt of serious godliness and the Scripture, to the irreparable loss of her honour, the disgrace of her friends, the ruin of her character, perhaps to her imbruing her hands in the blood of her own offspring. Point out to them the robber, the thief, perhaps the assassin, in the young man of spirit, infected with the leprosy of uncleanness, the itch of gaming, or the proud desire of appearing above his circumstances. Mark out to them the progress and consequence of ungovernable passion and revenge, from its first impatience of the control of God's word, and the meek religion of Jesus, till it presents itself unmasked, delivering up the man of sense, of education, perhaps of noble birth, into the hands of the

common executioner. It is your duty, in this alarming manner, not only to warn your children against lust, extravagance, passion, and revenge; but above all things, to labour to persuade them that those persons, and those alone, can be absolutely safe from the tyranny of *every* lust, who live by the faith of the Son of God. In full confirmation of this truth; your own knowledge of the world will enable you to point out to them many examples, where fine parts are utterly disgraced, where every shining accomplishment which nature and education can give, are rendered pernicious even in a high degree, by an union with lewdness or intemperance, avarice, or a proud impatient spirit; which abominable tempers, be most careful to assure your offspring, maintain their tyranny, because the principles of the Gospel and the truths of God are set at nought—tell them that in the Christian alone there is no dominion of sin. This will gradually inspire them with the highest veneration for the knowledge of God in Christ as displayed in the divine word, as the only bulwark (which in fact it is) against all the wickedness of the human heart: because only a knowledge of Christ and a belief of his Gospel can create a jealousy of the first appearances of corruption, and excite a fervent application to God for power to control and subdue it.

The last method of instruction I shall mention, and of equal benefit with those already stated, is to remark to your children, now capable of observation, the *amiable behaviour of real Christians.* I suppose you to be acquainted with some who justify their title to this glorious appellation. Remark the tranquillity of their countenance, the gentleness of their manners, and the

modesty of their conversation; observe how free they are from passion and positiveness, from ill-natured wit or ostentation: how far from despising those who want their advantages, either of education, birth, or riches: how careful to give no pain or uneasiness to any one.—In farther commendation of true Christianity, it will be of peculiar benefit to let your children, when grown up, witness the behaviour of sincere believers in the midst of their *severest trials*. If you are a Christian yourself in spirit and in truth, it is most probable you will know persons of the same character. When such are in affliction or tribulation of any kind, carry your children to hear for themselves the meek patient sufferers blessing God for all their afflictions: not fainting, not discouraged, but quietly enduring chastisement. Their discourse, their very countenance will edify. This will irresistibly convince them of the value and substance of the knowledge of Christ, and open their eyes to see that it is as much to be desired for present support and consolation in a trying hour, as to secure salvation in the eternal world. Then assure them that true faith in Jesus, shewing itself in unfeigned subjection to his Gospel, leads all to the same comfortable acquaintance with God, and cheerful submission to his holy will.

And if an opportunity could be found of bringing your son or daughter to the bed-side of a departing saint, it will infinitely exceed the force of all instruction, to let them see with their own eyes, and hear with their own ears, the faithful servant of God speaking good of his name, declaring how true the Lord his strength is, proclaiming the peace of his own mind

under the pains of an approaching dissolution, while he is looking for the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Persons of rank, or of easy fortunes; those also of the ministerial and various other professions, with merchants, and tradesmen of substance, will possess opportunity and ability to use with their dear children these and many other methods of instruction of the same kind, before they arrive at man's estate. And if in their own hearts they infinitely prefer the favour of God before the praise of men, the happiness of eternity before the poor satisfaction of time—if they know there is no other way of salvation for their offspring than that which is marked out by the Spirit of God in his word, then such attention to the everlasting welfare of their children will not be irksome but delightful. Their reward, generally speaking, will be with them in their labours of love, and their hearts will be gladdened by seeing considerable impressions made upon their children.

But if instead of this attention, custom and fashion are taken for the rule and measure of what you, O parents, are to account a sufficient care of your children's education; if hours upon hours from day to day are consumed in amusements and mere sensual gratification, hurtful to yourselves and others; while your children hear from you no wholesome lectures, and see in you no prevailing concern for the honour of God and the salvation of their souls, your conduct is dreadful indeed; your regard to Scripture is worthless, whatever you profess, and your ignorance of the excellency of God and the only way of true happiness as gross as that of a pagan. Examine therefore and

prove your Christian faith by your works. The care you take for the salvation of your offspring, or your neglect of them, is the surest test of what you esteem the supreme good, the favour of God or of the world.

I shall only add farther on this head of the duty of Christian parents towards their children, that it is absolutely necessary that the pains to instruct should be accompanied by *constant prayer to God* in their behalf. Without his grace their best-concerted efforts will be ineffectual, and all their counsels vain; for *it is God who giveth the increase.* You may take as much pains as it is possible, to make your offspring Christians altogether; but still those who receive the Lord Jesus Christ, *are born not of blood, nor of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* Therefore you are the more earnestly, humbly, and incessantly to pray unto God to implant early in them his grace, and give power and success to your attempts, that as by them the inhabitants of the world are increased, an addition also may be made by their names to the church of the living God, and the inhabitants of heaven. *

* See Prayer the *Seventeenth.*

SUNDAY XXIX. CHAPTER XXIX.

The Duty of Children; and of Servants and Masters.

HAVING considered the domestic duties of husbands and wives to each other, and of parents towards their children, it remains now that we complete those which concern a family, by stating such as relate to *children,* to *servants,* and to *masters.*

The duty of CHILDREN *towards their parents* is,

1. *To honour them* by respectful language; by abstaining from every thing that may reasonably give them the least offence or disquiet. All young people who receive the Scripture as the rule of their behaviour, will esteem it their duty to be exact and conscientious in this respect; because in the Scripture, God requires children to *honour their father and mother,* promising his blessing to all who do so. This homage is expressly said to be *well-pleasing unto the Lord.* Coloss. iii. 20. The crime of disobedience to parents is marked as the just object of the curse and judgments of God; for you read, that immediately after the prohibition of idolatry, a sin levelled directly against the glory of God himself, and after appointing all Israel to pronounce the idolater accursed; the very next offence, which at the same time is held forth as the object of universal execration, is the neglect of paying a dutiful regard to parents: *Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or mother, and all the people shall*

say Amen. Deut. xxvii. 16. And in case any child was guilty of undutiful behaviour, refusing to obey the voice of his father, or of his mother, after correction; it was the especial appointment of the Most High God, that his father and his mother should *lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they* were to *say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear.* Deut. xxi. 18—21.

What strong conceptions of the great guilt of disobedience to parents, must this ordinance raise in the minds of all who regard the word of God! For though this civil and political law be not now executed upon rebellious children, it remains a sufficient proof of the detestation with which God regards the disobedience of children towards their parents.

2. It is the duty of children to *conceal and extenuate the imperfections of their parents,* so far as truth and justice will admit. This is but a small return for the great benefits which they have received; and if, instead of thus acting tenderly, they are guilty of exposing voluntarily either the sins or the indiscretions of their parents, they are very criminal in the sight of God. It was the sin of publishing and ridiculing, instead of covering his father's offence, which brought down a signal judgment upon Ham. *

3. It is the duty of children to *requite their parents,*

* Genesis ix. 21—27.

as far as lies in their power, for all the comforts and benefits by their means bestowed upon them. Ingratitude is the *only* sin which never found one single advocate: yet of all ingratitude, the negligence of children in supporting and comforting their parents, is by far the most malignant and abominable that can be practised by man towards man. For what care and expence, what solicitude and labour for the welfare of their offspring, are not parents usually wont cheerfully to bear? Now when, in the course of God's providence, parents stand in need of some returns of the same tender disposition towards themselves—when the infirmities of age, or the burdens of affliction come upon them, what child, that is not without feeling, as well as without any tincture of Christianity, but must rejoice to be as helpful to them, now going out of the world, as his parents were to himself when he first came into it? This exercise of gratitude is marked in Scripture as the bounden duty of children towards their parents, and a neglect of it is considered not only as a renunciation of the Gospel, whatever zealous professions of love for it may be pretended, but as a crime, which even pagans, void of the light and advantage of God's word, would abhor. *If any provide not for his own* (his own near relations, and especially his own aged parents) *he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* 1 Tim. v. 8.

The exact proportion indeed which a child ought to set apart for the discharge of this duty to his parents, must be various, according to the condition of life. But if it be inadequate to the income of the child, God will regard it as a vile and despicable offering. And this rule may always be observed, that if a person can

be lavish in the pursuit of pleasure, and live in expensive splendour, while he is satisfied with assigning to his parents a strait and bare subsistence, a sense of duty is certainly not felt: and what is given, is given rather from fear of scandal, or from dread of remorse, than from love to God, or affection to his own parents.

4. The last duty I shall mention due from children to their parents is *obedience;* obedience in all cases which lie within the proper sphere and influence of the authority of parents; where their commands do not lead their children to oppose what God has required, to do violence in matters of conscience to their own minds, or to transgress the laws of their country.

These are the duties which children are bound, from their relation to their parents, to observe. And those children who obey the Scripture, will be found dutiful and affectionate, and very observant of these things. Indeed, those parents who are neglected or despised by their children, may generally impute it to themselves. It is the effect and punishment of their own sin. They fostered, when they should have corrected wicked tempers, in their children's earliest years: they shamefully sacrificed parental authority to a froward mind, and abjectly submitted to be governed by those over whom they were appointed governors, in the order of nature, and by the command of God. Or where this foolish and cruel fondness has not been the cause of disobedience to parents, a profane education, in ignorance of Christian principles, often has been; for this encourages a proud independent spirit, which, as it fears not God, will not pay

reverence to man, neither feeling obligation, nor bearing restraint. Excepting therefore a few cases, Christian parents, through the grace of God prospering their endeavours, will reap as they have sown, and enjoy, even before they leave this world, the fruit of those cares and pains with which they studied to promote the salvation of their children, and will often die in the pleasing expectation of meeting them in endless glory.

There is still another domestic relation, namely, that which subsists between MASTERS and SERVANTS. And a real Christian is furnished with ample directions and cogent motives to discharge his duty in either station with comfort to himself and those around him.

Servants, who receive the word of God, must in the first place be *faithful* and *honest,* free themselves from deceit, and be incapable of suffering their masters to be injured in their sight. This has been observed in a preceding chapter, as part of their character as Christians. Besides this, they must *obey their masters* without that surly, sullen, and unwilling behaviour which renders their persons offensive, and their services disagreeable. It is ever a sure proof of prevailing pride, when subjection, though ever so reasonable, is galling. They must obey their masters in all things, provided that nothing is required oppressive or dishonest. A surly spirit in servants chiefly shews itself in families, where the wages given are comparatively small, and the servant is wanted not for show or luxury of living, but for usefulness and labour. It is in these instances therefore, especially, that the beneficial influence of Christian doctrine is to manifest itself in the behaviour of servants. Christian servants will remem-

ber that their duty towards their master or mistress is not to be measured by the splendour of the family or the gains of the place, but by the order of God, who requires them *with good-will to do service, as to the Lord, and not to men.* Ephes. vi. 7.*

2. It is the duty of servants *patiently to bear reproof.* The pride of human nature rises with eagerness in self-vindication, and is backward to own itself deserving of any blame. From this spirit servants are ever apt to impute the admonitions they receive to ill-nature or peevishness in their superiors; and if they bear without a visible contempt what is said, they look upon themselves at liberty to pay no more regard to it than is necessary to keep their place, if it be a profitable one. But no servant who receives the word of God can act in this unreasonable manner. It is expressly required of them to adorn the Gospel of God our Saviour in all things; but if they shew themselves deaf to just admonition, and hardened against reasonable remonstrances, they utterly disgrace their holy profession, and make their religious pretences contemptible. Besides, if they are not ready to acknowledge their faults, and will not patiently bear to be reproved for them, they must be void of humility, without which no man can possibly belong to Christ; since this is the direction particularly given to them in Scripture, *to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again.* Tit. ii. 9.

And as servants who regard their Christian duty must be faithful and just to their masters, must obey

* See Coloss. iii. 22—24.

them with cheerfulness, receive their reproofs with meekness, and be careful to amend what is faulty; so must MASTERS, who are in subjection to Christ, conscientiously perform all parts of their duty *towards their servants.*

1. With respect to the *justice,* the *mildness,* the *gentleness,* and *real good-will* which masters must exercise towards their servants, these tempers were mentioned before, as necessary to every Christian. I shall speak now therefore only of those duties, which are peculiar to those who preside in families. The first of which is, *to be careful of the behaviour of their servants.* The head of every family is obliged to watch over those who are subject to his authority. We blame magistrates when they suffer irreligion and dissoluteness of manners among the people. And can a master of a family be guiltless, who connives at domestic irregularities, when with far less difficulty he can govern his little commonwealth? He ought therefore to look upon his servants, not as he does upon his cattle, merely considering the labour and service they can do, but as fellow-creatures capable of the knowledge of God, and as candidates equally with himself for his eternal kingdom. In this view it is his duty, and a part of Christian benevolence, to suffer no immorality, nor any open violation of God's holy law in them —to oblige his servants to a regular attendance on the public worship of God on the Lord's-day, and to insist on their not profaning it—to put books into their hands, written to awaken the conscience, and bring them to the knowledge of Christ—and, if the nature of business do not in fact render it impracticable, to call the members of the household to join in the daily

worship of God, who is the Fountain of all family mercies and blessings.

2. It is his duty also, *to set a Christian example to servants:* to be constant in worshipping God on his own day at church, and religiously to abstain in it both from business and diversion—to convince them that he acts honestly, as in the sight of God, in all his dealings—to shew them that he is innocent of those common yet presumptuous sins, of speaking loosely, swearing profanely, and living without any secret worship of God. By this example, as far as means alone can be effectual, he will restrain from much evil, and prove a powerful monitor to stir up ignorant sinful creatures to seek after God; at least he will be pure from their blood, if they obstinately persist in their sin.

The last duty of masters which I shall mention, is *to encourage and reward their servants for well-doing.* Kind expressions quicken ingenuous minds to diligence and attention; encouragement therefore ought to be given to servants on this principle. Further, when a servant hath laid out his whole time and strength in his master's service, and made it his study to consult his interest, the master is bound, by the ties of justice and gratitude, where there is a sufficient fortune, to remember such a faithful servant in the decline of life. And the cases of sickness, or accidental loss of limbs in service, which disable from labour, and are sometimes even more calamitous than the infirmities of old age, call for equal compassion. A Christian master will consider how much others have lost by the dishonesty of those about them; how much trouble, anxiety, and vexation they have suffered, while he has

committed, with composure and confidence, his affairs into the hands of a good and faithful servant, and has received no damage. How much of his comfort in this life has been owing to this material circumstance! Where then would be his Christian love, his generosity, or his humanity, if he did not take pleasure in shewing kindness in return?

Thus having pointed out the several duties of a Christian in his domestic relation, I will conclude the subject with a *faithful picture of the good order of a family,* in which each member conscientiously discharges the duty of his station, as every real Christian will desire and strive to do.

Look at those who preside in it: they love, and are cordially beloved by, each other; they both with true benevolence watch over their children, ambitious to educate them for immortality; they therefore discountenance every thing wrong and corrupt, at its first appearance. Both, with impartial affection for their whole offspring, gladly give them every innocent gratification, every liberty and joy which innocence and safety will permit. Behold their children: what respect, what confidence in their parents, what pleasure in their company, what cheerful obedience to their authority! Look upon the servants: faithful to their office, and prudent in their deportment, they are treated with respect. See parents, children, and servants, meeting together each day with one heart to magnify the name of God, and to confess that it is he who maketh them that dwell together in one house, to be thus united and harmonious. While all are looking forwards, according to the strength of their faith, to the place which Jesus is gone before to prepare for

them, where, without any further trials, or any remainder of corruption, they shall dwell together in love and in sinless perfection.—The age in which we live is adorned by some such families; and it is only the neglect of the Bible, and the low notions of modern Christianity, which make them so scarce, and prevent innumerable individuals from becoming subject to the power and grace of Jesus Christ, and enjoying that peace in him which passeth all understanding.*

* See Prayer the *Seventeenth*.

SUNDAY XXX. CHAPTER XXX.

On Self-denial with respect to Intemperance.

FALSE teachers court the favour of men by preaching to them flattering doctrines; but Jesus, the true witness, abhors such base compliance with our corrupt passions. He places therefore in the very front, as it were, of his camp, before the eyes of every one assaying to enter into his service, this searching test of courage and fidelity: *Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me, he cannot be my disciple.*

No doubt then can be made, whether self-denial be the duty of a real Christian. But what the ground of

this grace is, what the important particulars in which it is exercised, are points of very useful and necessary consideration. The more so, because superstition has long done every thing possible to make this doctrine utterly contemptible; and enthusiasm is ever ready to place self-denial in things absurd or frivolous, while the substantial matters, about which in reality it is concerned, are little regarded.

Each of these points therefore I purpose fully to discuss. Thus every duty respecting himself, which the Christian is obliged and enabled to discharge, will be sufficiently explained.

The *origin of self-denial* is to be traced to the corruption of our nature by the fall of Adam. For if there were no innate propensity in all his offspring to evil, we might then indeed have been warned not to debase our dignity, by complying with iniquity. Supposing that we possessed an untainted purity of nature, so far would abstinence from sin be from deserving the name of self-denial, that it would be the highest self-gratification. In this case, a total opposition to transgression of every kind would be perfectly undisturbed by any thing within of a contrary tendency. The native bent of the soul would then incline it, with all its power, and with the highest relish, to perform duty in its full extent. This we necessarily conceive to be the state with those angels, who are sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation, and who consequently must be witnesses of what passes in our world. For, to connect the idea of self-denial with their abstaining from the pollutions of which they are spectators, would be to destroy the very perfection of their state.

But the present condition of man is directly opposite to that of superior beings who never fell from God. A corrupt bias prevails in his heart, which instead of appearing to him detestable, is loved and cherished; so loved, that to be deaf to its tender pleadings for indulgence, and to sacrifice it in obedience to God, is compared by him, who knew what was in man, to cutting off a right hand and plucking out a right eye. For though happiness be in fact inseparable from an uniform subjection to the truth of God, yet our corruptions represent these as things distinct, and even incompatible. Hence men naturally fight against the prohibition of God for their favourite selfish enjoyments, as misguided rebels against a righteous king: nor can they ever submit to it without doing violence to their own depraved appetites.

This being our natural state, the Lord Jesus Christ assures us in the most unreserved manner, that, if ever we become partakers of his great salvation, we must not only oppose the prevalent wickedness of the world around us, but those very inclinations too, which are interwoven with our present frame, and therefore may properly be called a part of ourselves.

Having thus briefly observed what is the *origin* of self-denial, I proceed to point out *the particulars in which this grace is to be exercised.* Now as the constitutional sin makes that an instance to some of great self-denial, which is scarcely any to others; as there are cases also, where decency, reputation, and worldly interest create and maintain a kind of self-denial; and other instances, in which only the power of Christian godliness is sufficient: I shall therefore begin

with such instances of it as, generally speaking, are most easy to practise; and then ascend to those, in which the sincerity and eminence of Christian self-denial shines forth, and most redounds to the honour of God.

First then, TEMPERANCE *with respect to our food,* is not to be practised without self-denial. Few indeed find much difficulty in abstaining so far from this bodily indulgence, as to escape the censure of gluttony or Epicurism; yet to be so abstemious with regard to the pleasures of the table, as not to infringe upon the grace of Christian temperance, calls for some mortification in most people, and in many for a great deal. Without practising this, we shall be often guilty of over-charging ourselves, so far at least with surfeiting, as to feel the desire after eternal blessings and the delight in them greatly abated, if not extinguished for a time. With a reputation for temperance, we may indulge at our table, till indolence take full possession of us, till neither body nor mind are disposed for any rational, much less any spiritual, employment. To the want of self-denial, in respect of this grovelling appetite, is owing that unworthy uneasiness and vexation often discovered, though more frequently concealed, when the gratification of the palate in the parlour, is disappointed by ignorance or neglect in the kitchen; to this are owing the many sensual remarks made in conversation, upon what deserves no more notice than the husks the swine devour. These things, so frequently occurring, are sufficient proofs, that there is need of self-denial even with respect to our food. Indeed he that receives any other pleasure than what health and hunger will make the common provi-

sions of his table afford, has already begun to yield to intemperance, and is a transgressor of his Christian duty. He is shamefully giving encouragement to an appetite which must exceedingly sensualize his soul, render it a slave to bodily gratification, and of consequence make it averse from suffering in any degree for the sake of truth and conscience. So that those who allow themselves to eat intemperately, and permit their thoughts to dwell with delight on the luxury of the palate, are so far from taking heed, as Christians are required, to make no provision for the flesh, that they are evidently pampering it : so far from being so temperate, as is absolutely necessary for all who run the race Christ has set before us, that they remain slaves to sensuality. None are capable of relishing, much less of making a progress in any thing so spiritual and divine as Christianity, till in the language of holy writ *they put a knife to their throat,* when dainties are set before them ; that is, strike at the root of that carnal gratification which arises merely from the pleasure of feasting.

A second instance of self-denial included under the head of *temperance* is, the strictly avoiding any degree of *excess in drinking*. It is necessary to speak distinctly on this subject, because, to the reproach of our species, self-indulgence in this respect is commonly placed in the number only of venial infirmities, and amongst the slight misdemeanors, for which other good qualities will amply atone. To prove therefore the absolute necessity of self-denial, with respect to excess in drinking, consider what provocation it bears ! It is a waste of that plenty which God de-

signed to supply the wants of mankind. Now what can you conceive more contrary to reason, to humanity, and to the providence of our common Father, than that one man should be inflaming his body with pernicious draughts even to excess, while another wants the very necessaries of life? that one should be swallowing down his poisonous cups in riot, which, if properly applied, would prove a cordial to the languishing, and revive the health of those who are fainting for the want of it? Suppose you had several children settled in some distant province; some of them prosperous, and others, through unavoidable misfortune, in a destitute condition; suppose the former were destitute of all feeling, giving themselves up to rioting and excess, refusing to retrench in the least degree in order to relieve their necessitous brethren: what mingled grief and indignation would the report of this raise in your breast! Yet this is the very case in the eye of our common Father, whenever the man, who has *riches*, consumes upon the extravagant gratification of his base appetites, what might have been applied to the relief of the poor and needy. Even allowing the intemperate man to have the means, and, in the language of the world, liberty to live as he pleases, still his conduct is chargeable with inhumanity and cruelty to those who are in want before his eyes; or who are at least so near him, that if he was not wilfully deaf or blind, he must hear their groans and see their distress.

But when the man, who indulges in intemperance and drunkenness, is *poor*, or one whose business or income is but just enough, with frugality, to support himself and his family, his guilt is still more aggravat-

ed. For then, while he is gratifying himself, and rejoicing in his cups, he is breaking through the tenderest ties of nature. He is stripping his children of that which is necessary to defend them from the cold; he is snatching the bread from the mouth of his little ones, ready to famish for want of food; and making his wife suffer to extremity for his sensuality. Therefore, though his besotted companions may extol him for his honesty and good-nature, and some be so stupid as to call him no man's enemy but his own, he is, in the eye of truth and of God, a monster of cruelty and villany. The Father of us all can look down upon no one of his creatures more horridly rebelling against his benevolent laws, or more injurious to those who are miserable enough to be in close connexion with him, than the drunkard.

Further, we owe much thankfulness to God for our *reason*. By this we become capable of knowing him in his word and works here, and of enjoying him for ever hereafter. We are happy in ourselves, and useful to others, just in proportion as our reason is improved, by the due exercise and cultivation of it, through the knowledge of Scripture, and the grace of God. We may therefore safely say, that one of the sorest evils which can befall us in this world, is the loss of our reason. What guilt then must be chargeable on every drunkard, who presumptuously, only for the poor pleasure of gratifying the lowest appetite of his nature, suspends the use and exercise of his reason? who reduces himself to such a state that he knows neither what he does, nor what he says? And as we are commanded to be always on our guard in

our discourse, and warned of the account we must give of it to God, what can be a more audacious offence, than for a man to intoxicate himself till *his mouth poureth out foolishness;* till there is nothing so filthy or so blasphemous, which he will not utter!

Besides, it is our duty to *mortify* all our depraved appetites, and to bring them into subjection to the law of God. What a total violation of this comprehensive obligation is it to strengthen, by intemperate drinking, every evil propensity, and inflame it to the utmost! Yet this is the certain effect of drinking to excess. It provokes to anger, passion, and quarrelling; it begets insolence, and increases pride; it not only separates between the greatest friends, but hurries them into duels and transports of bloody revenge upon each other. Impure passions it heats also beyond measure, and gives to lust an unbridled rage.

Now so shameful a violence against reason, so provoking an abuse of plenty, so daring an act of rebellion against God, must, without repentance, certainly exclude every one guilty of it from any share in God's favour, as it demonstrates him to be void of any degree of his grace. Accordingly we are taught, in different yet most alarming ways, the insupportable doom of drunkards, and of those who inflame themselves with wine. Drunkards are enumerated in the black catalogue of transgressors, who, the apostle solemnly declares to the Corinthians, *cannot inherit the kingdom of God.* 1 Cor. vi. 10.—The dreadful end of self-indulgence in this respect is most emphatically described by our Saviour. *But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat*

and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matt. xxiv. 48—51.

Not only the train of present evils which intemperance draws after it, but the wages of this shameful iniquity in the *eternal world,* are revealed in Scripture, to alarm the conscience, and give us full conviction of the sinfulness of this common sin. So that either we must take heed, and beware of excess in drinking, or give up all reasonable hope of salvation and the favour of God. The thought of losing the favour of God, is worse than death to every one who truly believes the Scripture; every Christian therefore, however he may naturally incline to drink freely, or be tempted to it by company, or allured to it by a hope of recommending himself to his worldly advantage, will guard against all these temptations, and persevere in an inviolable regard to that sobriety, upon which his safety so much depends. *

* See Prayer the *Eighteenth.*

SUNDAY XXXI. CHAPTER XXXI.

On Self-denial with respect to Impurity.

MAN, in his fallen state, is so constituted, that there is not one natural passion, however useful and excellent it may be when properly regulated, which does not become the cause of sin, and require to be resisted and mortified. We have already seen how much this is the case with respect to the appetite for the pleasures of the table; the *natural* LOVE *of* THE SEXES is another example of the same kind.—This impulse, though necessary for the propagation of mankind, will prove in single persons, unless constantly restrained, a seducer of the soul into much sin, and the cause of the most extensive evil. It prompts some to the commission of secret uncleanness, and precipitates others into the open offence of fornication. At the instigation of this passion, what time, what talents, what influence are daily prostituted to the execrable artifices of seducing and ruining young women! Men of the finest sense and best education, for the most transient gratification, will be guilty of what is shocking to all who retain the least fear of God, or compassion for their fellow-creatures: guilty of bringing a heedless virgin to indelible shame, her parents to grief as torturing as it is undeserved and hopeless: guilty of offering the ruined victim of their lust such an injury, as if done to a sister, a daughter, or any near relation of their own, they would revenge with

the point of the sword. Instigated by lust, they will be accessary even to opening the way to adultery and all its train of mischiefs; for women seldom prove chaste after wedlock, who were before strangers to an untainted character:—accessary, as far as lies in their power, to filling the world with prostitutes, at once its plague and scourge; creatures abandoned to every detestable practice, corrupters of youth, pushing them headlong into desperate courses, in order to support their licentious commerce.

These consequences, in a greater or less degree, inevitably follow the indulgence of that appetite, to which we are naturally so prone. But bad as these consequences are, they compose only the *smallest* part of the evil produced by fornication. No pen is able fully to describe what the *soul* suffers from this sin. Where any sense of modesty or of duty prevails, it is instantly on the first commission punished with the secret stings and horrors of a guilty mind. By frequent repetition of the crime, all sense of religion is extinguished, and all intercourse with God ceases. Associations with those who are hardened in lewdness are sought after, as a refuge from conscience; till at length the secret offender against chastity contracts an hopeless obduracy of heart, and becomes an infamous pleader for the lust of concupiscence; till, in one word, his conscience is seared, the captive hugs his chains, glories in his shame, and finally confirms this maxim, that "Whoever *wholly* give themselves "up to *lust*, will soon find it to be the least fault they "are guilty of."

Add to this catalogue of dreadful evils, the bloody quarrels among the lewd, and the murders which they

are led to commit; murder of children, yet unborn, loading the mind with guilt, and embittering life beyond conception; murder often of the new-born babe, which the law avenges by the infamous death of its sanguinary parent. Instead, therefore, of saying (as libertines impudently speak) where is the harm of taking a little pleasure out of the way; you will perceive, that thieves and robbers are harmless and honourable compared with the *lewd*. Injuries from these open foes, have very soon an end, in most instances are borne with ease, and may be redressed: they do not strike at our immortal interest. But the seducer of a female destroys her reputation, tears her away from her family and friends, banishes her from the society of virtuous women, entangles her in the bloom of her years in the snare which will soon reduce her to that most abject of all conditions, the condition of a prostitute. So that the very mention, or even remembrance of her name, afresh excites grief in her family and relations, grief unassuaged by the least ray of hope in her death, or after-state.

Upon this fair representation of the case, ask any young woman; into whose hands she had better fall, into those of the seducer, or of the robber? "Into "his hands," she would say, "who will only take my "property, and fill me with momentary terrors; not "into the libertine's, who will plunge me into infamy, "lingering wretchedness, abandoned vice, and eter-"nal misery." Such pests to society are men of gallantry and pleasure! How astonishing, that ruin of virgins, dishonour of families, heart-breaking injuries done to worthy aged parents, and other certain effects of uncontroled lust, should be lightly passed over un-

der the magic name of love and gallantry! When will a public spirit and generous concern to prevent such heavy woes, excite men to brand every word spoken in favour of lewdness, as they do what is spoken to lessen our abhorrence of perjury and assassination?

There is indeed little reason to hope that young men will present to themselves such a view of the evil of fornication as it is the writer's design to exhibit; but on this subject he cannot be more explicit than the Word of God, where impurity is represented and condemned in the most striking manner, and by an authority which must not be trifled with. The rise and progress of lewdness, with all the various allurements that lead to it, are there contrasted with its fatal end. The lips of the harlot are painted dropping sweets like the *honey-comb, and her mouth smoother than oil;* but instantly, to quench the least rising of a lustful thought, *her end,* we are taught of God, *is bitter as wormwood,* and *sharp as a two-edged sword.* Prov. v. 3, 4. The simple young man she invites with *much fair speech,* to *take his fill of love until the morning:* (Prov. vii. 18. 21.) but immediately the treacherous offer is exposed, and under the thin veil of a fleeting pleasure, an injured body with an upbraiding conscience is discovered, pouring out that sad confession, *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!*

Still farther, lest a brutish love of pleasure should tempt young people to imagine they might easily make a retreat after yielding a little to fornication, or that it is not a sin of such high offence, God has most emphatically expressed both the infatuating power of

this lust, and the doom of those who live in subjection to it. *He,* that is the lewd young man, *goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks,* that is, utterly stupid and incorrigible, *till a dart striketh through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.* Prov. vii. 22, 23. *Why wilt thou embrace the bosom of a stranger? for the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction: and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.* Prov. v. 20—23.

To complete the testimony of God's abhorrence of the sin of fornication published in the Old Testament, let it be observed, that it was made a capital offence by the sentence of his own law; and the most abominable of vices is itself included in the same prohibition with that of fornication; designing, I apprehend, to teach us to what horrid lengths lewdness, indulged, will lead, and to create a dread of that sin, which is forbidden together with one so infamous; *There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a Sodomite of the sons of Israel.* Deut. xxii. 21.

I have been copious in producing the law of God in old time against the sin of fornication, in order to silence the ignorance of some who are foolish enough to wax bold in their lewdness, vaunting that there is only a passage or two in the New Testament positive in condemning their darling lust.

Indeed were it so, this would be sufficient; for till the New Testament is proved a forgery, (which is impossible) every injunction it contains, claims an equal

regard with any thing delivered before from God; since his declaration alone is such a sanction as stands in no need of any prior revelation to enforce it.

But instead of *a passage or two only* in the New Testament, as some pretend, absolutely condemning fornication, it is not possible to name a sin (that of contempt of Christ excepted) which is so generally mentioned in Scripture, or so constantly marked as the object of God's wrath. Not only our Redeemer and Judge ranks this with sins of the most malignant kind, and as a peculiar provocation of divine wrath, (Matt. xv. 19. Mark vii. 21.) but his great apostle scarcely writes a single epistle without some alarming prohibition against it. In one place St. Paul beautifully opposes the benevolent gratification of our natural appetite in a lawful way, to the terrible condition of those who are engaged in lewd commerce; *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* Heb. xiii. 4. In another, he not only affirms that *adultery, fornication, lasciviousness, and uncleanness, are the works of the flesh,* the fruit of our corrupted nature; but, with remarkable vehemence, he presses us to lay it to heart as a most certain truth, that each of these sins is absolutely inconsistent with a state of salvation; *Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Gal. v. 21.

Such is the light and power accompanying the Gospel, wherever duly received, that, in the judgment of the apostle, it should put an end to the very being of this enormity within the pale of the Christian church: *Fornication and all uncleanness—let it not once be nam-*

ed amongst you, as becometh saints—for this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person—hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Ephes. v. 3. 5. And lest the plausible ways of talking in defence of lewdness, in which debauched men of parts are very expert, should stagger any weak believer, and seduce him to imagine that fornication may be practised with impunity, this awful caution is given: *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be ye not therefore partakers with them.* Ephes. v. 6, 7. The same doctrine is as strongly inculcated upon the Christians at Colosse, and those at Thessalonica, in the following ample manner: *This is the will of God, even your sanctification; that ye should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, as the Gentiles which know not God; for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth* (what is said of the evil and danger of fornication, and of the absolute necessity of purity,) *despiseth not man,* but God.

St. John, taught by the inspiration of God, exposes no less clearly the greatness of the sin of fornication; for whoremongers, he declares, are shut out of the gates of the heavenly city. Rev. xxii. 15. *Whoremongers have their part* assigned them *in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.* Rev. xxi. 8.

But of all the Scriptures written on purpose to inspire an horror of fornication, those animated interrogations to the believers at Corinth are most striking;

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Do you not profess to belong to him, and that he is your life-giving head? *Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.* Would it not be monstrous to make such a vile use of them as to alienate them from his service, and, rending them off as it were from him, to turn them into the members of a lewd woman, by committing whoredom with her? *What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* 1 Cor. vi. 15. 19. Appropriated to God, you have no right to abuse your bodies by gratifying a brutal desire of pleasure. This is the worst kind of sacrilege: this the most dreadful of all profanations, the turning what is consecrated a temple for the living God, into an habitation for the spirit of uncleanness.

Sum up now what has been offered in proof of the great sinfulness of fornication. Consider the present evils so evidently connected with it, that no infidel can deny them; consider the repeated declarations of God's displeasure against this sin, from his first making it capital under the old law, to his dooming those who commit it to everlasting punishment again and again, in the last revelation of his will. Consider that this his unchangeable purpose is so openly, so strongly proclaimed, that either we have nothing to fear from *any* sin we can possibly commit, or fornication must be confessed to be a damnable one. Weigh these things, and you must acknowledge how much it is the duty of every Christian, as he loves God, as he reverences his word, nay as he regards his own salva-

tion, to deny himself in every propensity he feels to commit fornication, and to flee from it as he would from the face of a serpent. *

Know therefore, that you must either become apostate from the Christian faith, renouncing every hope of finding mercy from God, or you must mortify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness; and be fully persuaded, that this sin alone, supposing it were possible to subsist with the discharge of Christian duty in other respects, would drown the soul in perdition. For a serious and deep conviction of the evil and sinfulness of fornication is of great use to secure you in the early and most important season of life, from what is generally the first instance of premeditated rebellion against God; the first means of rivetting on the sinner that chain, which drags down its thousands and ten thousands to the prison of hell!

Further; Whenever any end is proposed, or duty enjoined, *the means necessary to attain the one, and to*

* All these considerations are absolutely necessary to be frequently pondered by young people, especially in a single state; because lewdness has not only a party in its favour in our very constitutions; but noise, and impudence, and numbers, every where combine to discountenance chastity. To such a shocking height is this attempt carried, that chastity is generally regarded as impracticable, except in cases where the interest of a family, or of a female in future life, depends upon *character*. Thus the lewd endeavour to make fornication appear necessary, and therefore innocent. Thus they represent self-denial in the preservation of chastity, as a grievous bondage; and the Bible, that enjoins it, as an odious book: and by these arts insensibly engage men's passions to throw off the authority of revelation, which so loudly proclaims the evil of a practice by which they are enslaved, and such as they desire above all things, at least in many instances, to look upon as harmless.

perform the other, are tacitly included in the general precept; and whatever in itself renders the practice of the duty very precarious, is virtually forbidden, where it can be avoided. Now from this most evident principle, a Christian is obliged to carry his self-denial much farther than a mere abstinence from the gross acts of fornication or uncleanness; for this may be done when there is no chastity; nothing more than a prudential continency. A Christian must resolutely shun all representations to the eye, and every thing that by the medium of the senses can be offered to his mind, exciting impure desire, or defiling the imagination. Thus the chastity of Job is expressed by his making a covenant with his eyes, absolutely to check them from gazing on an inflaming object: and our Lord brands as the adultery of the heart, the *looking upon an woman to lust after her.* In short, the same divine authority which condemns all gross lewdness, condemns every species and appearance of it also in word or thought. Therefore all light, wanton, and obscene ways of talking, however fashionable, are impure in such a degree as every Christian must detest. And as it is the temper of the heart which stamps the real character, no one can be said truly to mortify his sinful appetite, who cherishes any unclean thoughts, has the least pleasure in them, or can suffer a lascivious idea to rest upon his mind, or a sound exciting it to play upon his ear. For were it a renewed mind, were it a filial fear of God, were it a sense of the evil of sin, which restrained him from the commission of open lewdness, then the same principle must equally restrain from all near approaches to it, and from every

thing savouring of it. Indeed, where only a fear of shame, or of the temporal mischiefs which may follow lewdness, prevails, there a superficial self-denial extending to gross acts will be the only effect. On the contrary, where there is a real desire to be approved of God, and to walk worthy of his kingdom and glory, there purity in the most secret thoughts will be cultivated with all carefulness, and every person, jest, or object injurious to it, will be conscientiously avoided.

Here then a noble province for Christian self-denial opens! here the spiritual warfare, in which every believer in Jesus is daily engaged, becomes most visible; most visible in opposing all the licensed *honourable* ways invented by the world, to gratify the lewdness of the heart. Among the number of these licensed and honourable ways of cherishing defilement, may be enumerated all wanton glances of the eye, that mirror of the mind; immodest and amorous songs; impure ambiguities of expression; the very questionable amusements of the ball-room; the indulgence of a taste for novels; and far beyond all these, the entertainments of the theatre. For in this last-mentioned innocent amusement, as the world will have it called, in defiance of our holy faith, our reason and experience; in this innocent amusement, whatever can corrupt the mind is displayed to the greatest advantage. Is there a lewd allusion, or flash of impure wit? the air, the voice of the actor labour to give it the highest emphasis: while the greater part of the audience loudly applaud the entertainment. Nay, if by chance some piece should gain admittance on the stage, free from the character here reprobated, the house must

still have their prurient humour gratified by an entertainment or farce, full of innuendos; intimating that the happiness of the human race must stand or fall with those things which they merely "know naturally "as brute beasts." *

Now to live in the world, and thus, in direct opposition to its favourite taste, to preserve true chastity of mind, is a fruit of faith in Christ, and a part of self-denial indispensably required from all Christians. †

* If the reader should be tempted to censure this remark on the stage, the author is supported in it, by some of the greatest writers in the nation; particularly by archbishop TILLOTSON, who was never deemed either a rigorous, or an enthusiastic divine. And those who resent the absolute condemnation of this fashionable amusement, would do well to consider what this distinguished prelate says upon this subject.

"As the stage now is (the archbishop observes) plays are intolera-
"ble, and not fit to be permitted in any civilized, much less a Chris-
"tian nation. They do most notoriously minister both to infidelity
"and vice. By the profaneness of them they are apt to instil bad
"principles, and by their lewdness to dispose to lewd and dissolute
"practice, and therefore I do not see *how any person pretending to*
"*sobriety and virtue, and especially to the pure and holy religion of*
"*our blessed Saviour*, can, without great guilt and open contradiction
"to his holy profession, be *present* at such lewd and immodest plays;
"much less frequent them, as too many do, who would yet take it
"very ill to be shut out of the communion of Christians, as they cer-
"tainly would have been in the first ages of Christianity."

Sermon on the Evil of Corrupt Communication.

† See Prayer the *Eighteenth*.

SUNDAY XXXII. CHAPTER XXXII.

On Self-denial, with respect to the Desire of Wealth; the inordinate Affection for Things lawful; and the Love of Praise.

IT is a remarkable proof of the corruption of human nature, that *all* the passions which are natural to the human race, require to be restrained and mortified. If we look into the world, we do not find men in general so impressed by love to God, by delight in spiritual things, by ardent benevolence, as that attention and caution are required lest those virtues should be carried to excess (if there could be excess in them) and lest the business of this life should be neglected. As the bias lies on the other side, the danger is, lest Religion should be neglected; lest the love of the world and the lusts of the flesh should be cherished. Religion therefore supposes human nature to be corrupt. It is in fact nothing but a system of restraint upon man: it prevents his doing what he is strongly inclined to do, and requires him to do what else he would not think of performing. We have already seen how much self-denial is requisite with respect to the pleasures of the table and other natural appetites: we now observe, thirdly, that corrupt self must be denied in its propensity to COVETOUSNESS.

This propensity there is in us all: for though we may feel no inclination to be fraudulent, in order to increase our gain; yet still we are naturally apt to de-

sire wealth, and to place our happiness in amassing money. Commerce and custom perpetually cherish this corrupt principle; and the world sees no evil in being intent on getting as much as it is possible to gain with a fair character. By this mean, what at first setting out in trade was no more than a bounden duty to provide honestly for ourselves and our family, soon grows into a very mischievous and wicked passion.

This propensity to love money it is the duty of a Christian to resist in its first workings: for it is entirely opposite to the temper of mind required in a Christian, and it is declared by Scripture to be ruinous to the soul wherever it prevails.

It is *opposite to the temper of mind required in a Christian,* for he is called to seek after a better, that is, a heavenly country, and to stand always ready for an immediate separation from all things visible. But the propensity to covetousness, unless denied, will, on the contrary, utterly *benumb all feeling of futurity,* suffering him to think of nothing with frequency or earnestness, but wealth and its present advantages. It will possess his mind with a strong delusion, that money is the chief good of man on earth; and utterly exclude all just apprehensions of the religion which cometh from God, the characteristic of which is, that it overcometh all worldly lusts.

Besides, the Gospel is revealed to fix us, through our knowledge of the grace of God, in a state of full *resignation* to his will; so that in want or in affluence we should be able to say, We know *how to be abased, and how to abound; every where and in all things* we are *instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to*

abound and to suffer need. But a covetous spirit can only appear to conform itself to the will of God so long as his providence is favourable. If God give prosperity, then a man tinctured with covetousness may possibly find himself inclined, in some degree, to serve and adore his Maker; but should misfortune upon misfortune scourge him, he will be fretful, murmuring, and inconsolable.

The Gospel makes the truth and substance of religion to be *a firm trust in God,* and a delight in him as our chief happiness. But Avarice says unto gold, "Thou art my confidence; Thou art the god, whose "presence bringeth with it the greatest blessing, and "whose absence is the greatest curse." The Gospel is given on purpose to exalt our desires with increasing fervour towards God, to fix our affections with immoveable stedfastness on things above, and to engage us in the constant pursuit of them with an ardour in some degree suited to their worth. The covetous person, by making wealth the object of his chief desire, has no warmth of affection left for God, he retains nothing more than the husk of heartless duties; he forms no idea of the blessedness of being with God in any other view than as a sort of refuge, when death comes, and riches can be no longer possessed.

And to mention no more instances of the inconsistency of Covetousness with the Christian character; it *hardens* the heart towards our fellow-creatures, and, either from a fear of lessening our treasure, or a desire of increasing it, will esteem charity to be a low subordinate duty, and leave our neighbour, partaker of our own flesh, to struggle with sickness and with want; and even to perish unassisted. Directly op-

posite to this is the disposition of a Christian: he is ready to give, and glad to destribute, putting on bowels of mercy, and feeling love unfeigned. He remembers with joy, that it is the will of God that those who are rich should give plenteously, as stewards and not proprietors of their wealth; that thus the great abundance of some may prove a supply to the want of others; that those who have much should have nothing over, and they that have nothing should feel no lack.

In this view, the sin of Covetousness, respecting either God or man, is most evident, and by consequence the duty of self-denial, in resisting every motion we feel tending towards it in our own breasts.

To enforce this self-denial, it is necessary to consider further, the Scripture representation of covetousness, as a temper ruinous to the soul.

And here it is remarkable that the covetousness against which we are so earnestly warned in God's word, is not of the kind generally deemed scandalous, but such as may govern the heart of a man who is esteemed virtuous and excellent by the world. In the tenth Psalm, the covetous, whom the Lord is there said to *abhor*, are the very persons of whom the wicked speak well: which could never be the case, did their love of money make them either villanous in their practice, or miserably penurious in their temper; for men of this stamp none commend. The same thing is observable in that solemn caution given by our Redeemer, *Take heed, and beware of covetousness.* By which it is evident that he meant no more than a desire springing from a rooted persuasion, that the comfort of life consists in abundance; this was the co-

vetousness our Lord condemns. And that his admonition might sink the deeper, he represents that avarice which he condemns, in a case which passes every day before our eyes. It is this: a man grows rich in his business, not through fraud or extortion, but by the blessing of God upon his own labour and skill. As is usual, he is highly delighted with his success: he exults in the prospect of being master, in a few years, of an independent fortune! in the mean time he is determined to be frugal and diligent, till he takes his final leave of business to enjoy all the sweets of ease and splendour. Luke xii. 19. Now, who, governed by the common maxims and principles of human nature, can see any thing to blame in this man's sentiment or conduct? Is it not what they applaud and imitate themselves? Yet this very man our Lord sets before our eyes as the picture of one engrossed by a covetous desire of the things of this world. This very man he represents as summoned in the midst of all his golden hopes, to appear a guilty criminal at the bar of his Maker. Lo! this is the man whom our Lord exposes as a miserable wretch for all others to take warning by, and resist covetousness: *So,* such a fool and such a sinner as this, *is he that layeth up treasure for himself,* that is, every earthly-minded man, who seeks after wealth, as if it were the foundation of happiness, *and is not rich towards God,* rich in faith, hope, and holiness. Luke xii. 21.

St. Paul, in perfect harmony with his Lord, forbids the desire of wealth as a criminal effect of avarice. *Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* Heb. xiii. v. And where,

instead of this self-denying temper, a desire of increasing in wealth is cherished; there snares, defilement, and ruin, are declared to be the certain consequences; for, *They that will* (the original signifies the simple desire) *be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

Now, however easy it may seem to despise that sordid spirit of avarice, which only meets with contempt from the world; the accumulation of riches by every dirty method, and, for fear of expence, the refusal afterwards to make any use of them; yet to resist the subtle operations of covetousness, according to the Scriptural definition of that depraved disposition, must be confessed to be a most heroic instance of self-denial. For suppose men to be engaged in business, how strong are their natural fears of failing, and their desire to prosper! how dependent must they be at first on those who employ them! Consider the constant language of the world in calling wealth a blessing and a reward; its custom of treating men with respect, and paying court to them, exactly in proportion to their monied worth; weigh these things, and then say whether any thing can be more contrary to our natural selfishness than to renounce all love of money? than to be quite satisfied with using constant industry and all our skill, which God commands us to do, in our trade or profession; and when that is done, to cast all our care upon him, cheerfully leaving it to his own most wise and gracious will in what degree we shall

grow rich, or whether ever at all; assured that if we dwell in the land and are doing good, by an uniform subjection to God's word, he will bring it to pass, that upon the whole our condition shall be appointed to us in richest mercy? What more difficult self-denial can be conceived, than to live in the temple of the god of riches (as this world may too justly be called), hearing high and low, priests and people, all paying their adoration to this Mammon of unrighteousness, and yet remain uninfected by thirst for money? This can be obtained only by unintermitted discipline exercised over our own hearts, and by possession of the true riches in the knowledge of God and Christ.

If it should be said, Do you mean then to affirm, that it is *wrong for any man to acquire wealth?* The Scripture, I answer, condemns only the *desire* of riches and the *passion* for them, as defiling and sinful. Therefore, if while your whole heart is given to God, he is pleased to prosper whatever you take in hand, and to give you an abundant increase, then your wealth is evidently as much the gift of God, as if it came to you by legacy or inheritance. It is God's own act and deed to call you up, content to sit down in a low place, to an higher one, and to intrust you with more talents, to improve them for his glory. Now the difference between *possessing wealth,* thus put into your hands, and *desiring to grow rich,* is as great as that between a worthless ambitious intruder into a place of honour, seeking nothing but his own base interest, and a man sought out for his worth, and invested with the same office for the public good. And those who can see no material, no necessary distinc-

tion in the two cases, are already blinded by the love of money.

Nor let any one deem it useless or severe to exercise so strict a self-denial over the covetous propensity of his heart. *Useless* it is not, because we can never be secure from the dominion of sin, unless we guard against its first plausible insinuations to gain admission. But if we were allowed to give place to wishes and desires of being richer than the providence of God, unsolicited by us, sees fit to make us, what a suspicion must this imply of his love for us, and how soon must it insensibly betray us into sinful schemes of gratifying our predominant desire! Whereas, by commanding us to rest with a full affiance on his providential goodness and fatherly affection, in a way of diligence and duty, all the avenues, by which temptation would approach to enslave us, are shut up, and by resolutely refusing all correspondence with the enemy, we are safe from his treachery as well as from his open assaults.

Neither is such strict self-denial, as forbids our entertaining a wish or desire to have more than is sufficient for our present provision, *severe*, and irksome to practise. Because as sin is most powerful, and grace most weak, when we are but just within the verge of salvation, and the limits of what is lawful; so is the liberty and pleasure of the soul enlarged in proportion as it deserts the haunts of sin: when, instead of turning back to its paths as paths of pleasantness, we flee from them as utterly detestable, as the ways of destruction and misery. Add to this, so far is the *desire* of riches from constituting the pleasure of them, that it really fills the mind with anxiety; so far from aug-

menting the comfort of those who cherish such a desire, that it turns every little loss or disappointment into a grievous burden, and creates vexation of spirit on a thousand occasions without cause or end.

Fourthly, Self-denial must be practised in the use and enjoyment *even of* THINGS LAWFUL. Intemperance, impurity, and covetousness, are in every degree defiling and sinful: nothing can be urged in their defence by those who will reason justly, or who believe sincerely the word of God. But when we have subdued these corruptions of the heart, there still remains much exercise for self-denial with respect to the comforts and conveniencies we possess. We must be careful to use them as not to abuse them. We must keep our hearts disengaged from those temporal blessings which have no intrinsic worth, and which others, better than ourselves, often want. By this self-denial we shall receive all the benefit outward comforts were intended to confer on their possessors, without putting our peace in their power, in case the providence of God should deprive us of them. Now, considering how very uncertain all our outward comforts are, and how impossible to be absolutely secured to us for any time, it is certainly wise to cherish such an indifference towards them, as their precarious nature requires.

Among these lawful things in which self must be denied, our nearest and *dearest relations* are included. For though much love be due to them, and a tenderness of affection which will make our connexion a source of true pleasure, still God alone must possess the supreme place in our hearts. But unless we are much upon our guard, and very jealous of ourselves;

it will often happen, that where we love as we ought, we shall soon love as we ought not. The affection which should be kept subordinate, will intrench upon what we owe to God, and render us by degrees cold towards him. What neither intemperance, nor lust, nor covetousness could effect, a passionate fondness for a husband, a wife, or a child will often produce. It will alienate the affections from God, by substituting an idol in his place; an idol which we shall more studiously seek to please, and be more fearful to offend, than our God: an idol, in whose uncertain life all our happiness will centre, and whose death will prove a stroke too heavy to bear with Christian submission.

The danger of this inordinate affection is mentioned in Scripture, and self-denial in this instance is peculiarly enjoined. *If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children,* that is, so far as they would interfere with a supreme affection for Christ, and hinder faithfulness in his service; if he does not as much renounce all his fondness for them, as if he had an actual hatred towards their persons, *he cannot be my disciple;* he cannot stand when brought to the fiery trial; and though that should never be the case, his heart cannot be whole with me. Luke xiv. 26.

The same doctrine of self-denial is inculcated by St. Paul, and founded upon an argument which still remains in its full force. *Brethren,* says he, *the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed*

not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. Short-lived as we are ourselves, and still shorter in duration as our best earthly comforts so often prove, we only act according to the nature of our condition, as well as in obedience to God, when we limit our affections towards them. Thus we shall still be happy in a separation from them, no less than in their possession. God, who is without any variableness, will be our joy, and the failure of the cisterns too many hew out for themselves, will the more enhance to us the Fountain of living waters. To perceive the excellency of being thus disengaged from inordinate affection towards objects which it is not unlawful to regard with peculiar love; look upon the fond mother, dumb with grief; like Rachel, weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted *because they are not!* Observe the settled melancholy by which thousands are oppressed, through a separation from the husband or wife of their youth, with whom they promised themselves a length of joyous years. Behold all their happiness shivered in pieces, all interred with the idol on which they doated! The whole creation is now become as the barren wilderness, and no prospect of ease before them, but in the gloomy thought of dying soon themselves!

Consider this afflicting scene occurring daily, and you will be compelled to own that no self-denial can be more reasonable or more necessary, than that of suppressing all inordinate affection towards those dear objects which may be torn in a moment from us; and which, when delighted in beyond measure, are sure to pierce us far more deeply with anguish by their loss,

than they ever could repay our excessive love with joy by their presence.

Fifthly, Corrupt self must be denied *in our love of the* PRAISE *of men*. It is evident, that unless something nobler than what earth can give, be the grand object of pursuit, the praise of men is as delightful to the mind as sounds exquisitely harmonious are to the ear, or the most delicious flavours to the taste. The heathens avowed the love of praise to be the spring of all that gave a lustre to their names. Thus Themistocles owned, that being pointed at in the public meetings, afforded him a pleasure which amply rewarded him for all the great exploits he had done for his country. And Tully is not ashamed to publish to the whole world his vanity, that he rose up in defence of Rome against her unnatural conspirators, not from a spirit of patriotism, but to erect to himself a monument of glory. The same principle gave birth to the austerities of the Pharisees, and to the duties of religion they performed; all their works they did to be seen of men. That in this respect human nature is always the same, is evident from the pain men feel whenever they meet with expressions of disgrace and scorn; how keenly do they pierce, how greatly provoke! It is evident also from the visible pleasure with which men generally listen to their own commendation, and incite every designing flatterer to offer them his incense.

Now this strong innate love of the praise of men, it is the duty of a Christian to deny. He must not suffer it to direct his actions. Were so false a principle to govern him, the *judgment of the world* would be his *rule* of life, in contempt of God his Maker and his

Judge. He would judge of the extent of his duty not from the plain command of God, but from what was reputable or otherwise. What will the world think of me? would be an alarming suggestion, fatal to every purpose of living as a real Christian: and the fear of an appearance of enthusiasm in abstaining from fashionable vices, would reconcile him to practices glaringly opposite to his duty. Whatever knowledge and conviction of the truth he might have more than others, fondness for applause from men would compel him to hold the truth in unrighteousness, and to be worse, even in spite of his convictions, than the world, in order to enjoy its approbation.

Further; this principle, if not effectually resisted, not only leads to evil, but *corrupts* what has the appearance of being good. It influences you to do all things from mere selfishness, that you may stand high in reputation. In a word, as base parasites at court know no other standard of good or evil than their prince's humour; so the love of praise, if not mortified, will suffer you to avow neither doctrine, sentiment, nor practice, but what is in good repute with the world, however strongly it may be enforced in Scripture as the truth, and inwardly believed by you to be such.

The love of praise therefore, being so opposite to our obedience to God, all its soft treacherous insinuations must be denied. For as there is nothing necessary to our salvation, but what is taught us in the Bible, and nothing there enjoined but what is necessary and infinitely beneficial too, we must conform to that infallible rule. This must be our only ambition, this our single aim, to walk before God to all well-plea-

sing, regardless of our character among men, whether approved or condemned, while we act conscientiously. If, in the discharge of our duty, we meet with praise, as we certainly shall from all real Christians, we may take encouragement from it, and be thankful to God for his grace: if, on the contrary, we meet with obloquy and detraction; unmoved by it, we must steadily persevere to give offence to those who are distempered enough to take it, on account of our fidelity to God. Whatever reluctance we feel, we must bid defiance to all the mortifying methods used to make regard to worldly estimation, operate so ruinously, as first to abate, and finally extinguish our zeal for divine truth.

This is a noble species of self-denial, of which none but Christians in reality have any knowledge. But though the love of praise be naturally as sweet to them as to others, they have *sufficient motives* to wean them from seeking it. Jesus Christ, the great object of their hope and affiance, of their love and delight, ever since they believed, is present to their minds. They frequently meditate on his life, who was not only despised, but suffered outrage for their sakes; who hid not his face from shame and spitting, who gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. In contemplation of this amazing fact, the love of the praise of men loses its bewitching power; while a deep veneration and a most affectionate regard for one who was despised and rejected of men, though infinitely deserving of the highest adoration, reconciles the believer's mind to abstain from seeking praise from the world.

Besides this weighty motive to deny self in not seeking the praise of men, Christians are *taught to expect contempt* on account of their religion, and exhorted in no degree to marvel at it, or to be discouraged by it. In the thirty-seventh Psalm, written when all the professing people of God used the same religious mode of worship, when there was no opposition on account of any supposed innovation in religious tenets: in this Psalm, full of consolation to the faithful, the enmity incurred by a truly conscientious behaviour is thus strongly marked, *The wicked seeth the righteous, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and bent the bow, to slay such as be of upright conversation.* As the publication of the Gospel drew near, the Almighty exhorts all who should be disposed to receive it, not to suffer their love of praise, or their fear of shame, to make them conceal or dissemble their faith: *Hearken unto me,* saith the Lord, *ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.* Isai. li. 7. When Jesus himself appears, and publishes a complete delineation of the tempers of all his faithful followers; that humility, meekness, and zeal for God; that purity and mercy which were to rule in their hearts, and to constitute their essential character; he immediately declares, how insupportable the character, lovely as it is in itself, would prove to men of corrupt minds. He assures his followers therefore, that *they* are blessed who are slandered and even persecuted for the sake of this righteousness; a righteousness the imitation of his own, therefore upbraiding and galling to men of partial and superficial virtue.

Now these instructions come strongly in aid of a sense of duty, to love the praise of God, and to seek only that honour that cometh from him. They are of great efficacy to cool the heart, that would otherwise burn for reputation. And while Christians are only studying to be found approved of God, their *eye being* thus *single; their whole body*, according to the gracious promise, (Luke xi. 34.) will be *full of light;* of the light of truth, holiness, and comfort: in this they will enjoy more than a counterbalance to the loss of human praise, more than a recompence for all aspersions cast upon their understanding, choice, and conduct. *

* See Prayer the *Eighteenth.*

SUNDAY XXXIII. CHAPTER XXXIII.

On Self-denial with respect to Shame, or Loss on account of Religion; Pride of Reason; and Self-righteousness.

WE have seen the necessity of exercising self-denial with respect to our sensual appetites, with respect also to the inclinations natural to man, for wealth, the comforts of life, and the praise of our fellow-creatures:—*Religion*, which teaches us the necessity of self-denial in general, is itself the occasion of opening to us a new scene for its exercise: it creates new duties, and requires self-denial in cases

which do not come within the notice of the world in general. Thus the *profession of a higher degree of religion* than is common in the world, subjects us to a loss of reputation, to bear which, without being ashamed or overcome, will require no trifling exertion of self-denial. We all naturally follow the custom and fashion of the world around us; and though not fired with the love of fame, we still feel it grievous to be reproached as bigots, fools, or enthusiasts. When therefore we observe that our attachment to Scripture principles, in condemnation of corrupt practices and fashionable errors, will render us disagreeable and unfit for the company of the polite: pride will begin strongly to urge us to dissemble, and not to appear more attached to religion than others: it will be swaying us to *seem* at least to approve what all the company approves, though we condemn it in our hearts.—Therefore,

Sixthly, *Fear of ridicule, and opposition on account of Religion,* in all its various and crafty operations, must be denied; because nothing can be more base, more encouraging to wickedness, or more destructive to our own souls.

Nothing can be more *base* than such a dastardly obsequiousness to the opinions of men; since, besides the reigning cowardice it betrays, what a return is this for the inestimable blessing of the knowledge of the truth! Was it for this end, do you think, that God gave to you the knowledge of his truth, to which others are strangers, only that you might shew him the greater indignity, by preferring to his favour your reputation? Was the light of life kindled within you, that you should industriously conceal it, choosing to

appear dark in your understanding, rather than bear the censure or ridicule of those, who, you well know are, enemies to the light, only because their deeds are evil? Were an officer to be found thus ashamed of his king or his service, how must he appear? yet what fidelity does he owe to his king, or what advantages does he receive in his service, worthy to be named with the benefits God pours out upon us! Hence both gratitude and justice require us all, as far as we know the truth, and our duty towards God, to avow religion, and not to be ashamed of being accounted righteous over-much, by those who neither have, nor can bear more than, the unavailing form of godliness.

Indeed, unless we deny ourselves, and, in a manner suited to our station in life, appear open advocates for the cause of God, we *contribute to the increase of wickedness:* for where there is no opposition, sinners both grow bolder and multiply the faster. What all men either do themselves, or express no abhorrence against in others, it is naturally concluded, can have no great harm in it: thus all sense of the necessity of real religion is banished from society, and profaneness, from its general prevalence, loses its guilt in the judgment of men. But such a general prevalence of evil would be prevented, if the appearance of it were resolutely checked by a disapproving silence and cool reserve; or, where age or condition of life authorize it, by an open rebuke. This would serve to keep up the distinction between good and evil: this would remind men of their dependence upon God, and often prove, through divine grace, an effectual monitor to awaken the conscience, and pro-

duce a change of sentiments and manners. But if, through a mean fear of injuring our paltry reputation with ungodly men, we refuse to signify, by any of these methods, our sense of God's authority and government, of his hatred to sin, and his love of Christian holiness, we are then accessaries to the abounding of iniquity, we become sharers in the guilt by being tame spectators of the insult offered to our God, and by listening without expressing our disapprobation of the *hard speeches which ungodly sinners* are wont to speak *against him*.

But if neither a sense of gratitude, nor a fear of contributing to the propagation of iniquity, can prevail with us to overcome our natural cowardice in the cause of God, let us at least *consider the destruction it will bring upon our souls*;—let us therefore oppose fear to fear, and weigh the insufferable pain of contempt from God and angels, against the shame of being branded for religion here before men. For immediately after the injunction of that self-denial, without which it is impossible to follow Christ, the trying instance of being content to lose our character for his sake is pointed out: *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.* Mark viii. 38. Matt. x. 33.

Seventhly, Self-denial must be exercised with respect to the FEAR of SUFFERING for the sake of God and his truth. In the inferior ranks of life all persons are called, more or less, to this exercise, through their

necessary dependence upon the rich. For when a person begins business, or enters upon a profession, how desirable is the favour of the great and opulent to him! to have their smile, to be admitted a guest at their table, is deemed an honour; and while their interest procures preferment, their custom brings the tradesman the largest return of gain. Hence a violent temptation arises, to be esteemed no more religious than is agreeable to the rich, or to their principal domestics, on whose favour so much depends. Are they therefore profane? every dependent will be tempted to say, Why should I appear a friend to godliness? are they lewd and intemperate? why should I hurt my interest by refusing to join with them in excess of wine, or in impurity, or by appearing to condemn such vile practices? Should conscience remonstrate, self-interest will lead a man industriously to stifle every conviction, afraid of losing the best of his customers, or his only patron, by being offensively religious.

Every one knows how much the principal inhabitants in all places keep their inferiors in awe by the tie of worldly gain: and where their example is profane, they spread on every side a dreadful contagion.

In such a situation, Christian self-denial displays its energy. The believer will dare to shew a conscientious regard to the law and truth of God in the view of his superiors, though sensible that his conduct will gall and irritate. Fear of poverty will not make him belie his better judgment, or deny his God in order to gain favour with men. And while discretion and humility on one hand, set bounds to his advice or reproof, and direct him as to the time and manner of

applying them; his fear and love of God, on the other, will certainly discover his true character, and his abhorrence of all iniquity.

The weight which eternal things have upon the believer's mind, the sting which he has often felt in his conscience for seeming to approve what God condemns, the express command to make a public profession of godliness, and the disinterested manner in which the Redeemer has suffered to purchase his everlasting salvation, all join their influence, and are of great force to enable him to risk the loss of all things, rather than be ashamed of God and his word.

Now though such an opposition to custom, and to our natural fear of suffering in our worldly circumstances, extremely terrify the mind of man, yet those who deny themselves, and forsake all, leaving it to God in the way of diligence and truth to provide for them, generally prosper even in this world. And no wonder; for they are heirs of that all-sufficient promise, *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate—and I will receive you; and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* 2 Cor. vi. 18. And if any man, professing himself a Christian, dare not thus rely upon God for a temporal provision, when it seems to be endangered by his adherence to duty, it is certain *that* man can place no trust in God for eternal salvation; but while he makes professions of believing in God, he is an infidel in his heart. Nay further, he entertains an idea of the character of God, such as if any one were to conceive of himself he would esteem most degrading, viz. that God can unconcerned see his own children brought into distress, through a dutiful attach-

ment to him, when all power is in his hands to reward and bless such fidelity. Such a God as this, fearful unbelieving professor, thou conceivest the God of heaven and earth to be.

Eighthly, Self-denial must be exercised with respect to the PRIDE of REASON, in submitting without disputing to the written word of God. A kind of restraint this no less difficult for men of superior understanding to practise, than for the sensual to be chaste, or the covetous charitable. Yet in requiring such submission to his bare authority, God requires from us nothing unreasonable; because the objects he reveals to us are both above human comprehension, and at present only revealed in part. *We preach,* said the apostle, *the wisdom of God in a mystery;* and therefore the doctrines of Scripture must not be rejected, under a pretence that they contradict common sense. Instead of indulging, we must repel that insolent query, How can these things be? For, as ignorant creatures, it is our duty, and as Christians our profession, to rest satisfied with what God has declared to be the truth. When this declaration is once known, we are to shut our eyes against numberless difficulties relating to the truth, which human wit or human ignorance may start. This is our duty, though infinitely mortifying to the proud and arrogant. This is also *rational:* for how can any one reasonably deny that to be true, if it involve no palpable contradiction, which hath this decisive evidence, that God in his revelation hath declared it? And how can any one be sure that there is a *real* contradiction in things, which it is confessed he cannot thoroughly comprehend? Though reason therefore be of signal service in teaching us, to a certain degree, the know-

ledge of causes and effects; and, within its proper limits, not to be disparaged; yet, when it is puffed up with a false conceit of its own power, it must be mortified, no less than any other depraved faculty. Otherwise we shall soon think ourselves at liberty to disdain to repose *implicit* faith even in God himself. Instead of proving doctrines to be unscriptural, it will lead us to urge their apparent absurdity as sufficient reason to reject them. Thus one part of revealed truth after another will be renounced: first the Trinity, then the doctrine of Christ's atonement, next our fall and natural corruption; till at length there will be nothing in the Bible allowed to be true, but what a pagan might subscribe, and a deist receive.

If it should be said that such implicit obedience will expose us to receive real absurdities under a pretence of reverence for the authority of God: The answer is obvious; a distinction must be made between our obedience *before* we are persuaded the Bible is the word of God, and *after*. Before this firm conviction, the human understanding has the fullest liberty to canvass, and put to the severest trial, all the arguments which demonstrate Jesus to be the Christ, and the Bible to be the revelation of God. Every man of capacity for this work, should do this; because these proofs depend on incontestable maxims, and make their appeal to the faculty of judgment concerning facts, which is less impaired by the sin of the fall than any other.

During the whole time therefore that these outward evidences are under consideration, reason is to sit sole arbitress, and in the full exercise of her powers. But when once the Scripture record *is* received, as it always must be, if men inquire honestly, it immediately

claims an absolute submission. *Then,* should reason offer to cavil at any thing contained in the book it acknowledges to be of God, it is self-condemned: Because it is the height of arrogance to urge our want of comprehending the *fitness* of what is taught, against the veracity of an infallible teacher. On the contrary, it immediately becomes the highest act of reason wholly to rely upon the testimony of Scripture, and to receive implicitly all it declares.

That it is the *duty* of a Christian in this manner to mortify his intellectual pride, there are many Scriptures to prove. To this purpose is that remarkable declaration of God, *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* 1 Cor. i. 19, 20. To the same purpose is that positive assertion of the absolute contrariety of Scripture truth, to what the wisest men in their natural state conceive is *fit* for God to reveal; *The wisdom of God is foolishness to men.* In confirmation of the same doctrine, so mortifying to the pride of the human understanding, our Saviour, we are assured, rejoiced in spirit that while men who idolized their own reason were incapable of beholding the truth of God, those who submitted their understanding to him enjoyed the unspeakable blessing of it. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;* that is, to such as with humble acquiescence, like little children, receive what is taught them of God. Matt. xi. 25.

St. Paul inculcates the same species of self-denial,

when he declares, *If any man think himself wise, let him become a fool,* (that is, in his own estimation, as much in need of teaching) *that he may be wise.* With the same view he assures us that the effect of the apostolic preaching, wherever it succeeded to the salvation of the hearer, was to *cast down imaginations* (λογισμας, corrupt reasonings; corrupt, because impious, where the word of God has once decided) *and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* 2 Cor. x. 5.

Such Scriptures evidently control that sceptical and daring spirit, which too many dignify as the privilege and just exercise of reason. Nor would such Scriptures have been given to us, unless we had a propensity, when we possess an understanding or learning superior to others, to make a creed for ourselves, when in fact we can know nothing of the things of God but as we are taught them by himself. Against this pride of reason believers must be constantly upon their guard, and not dare, through difficulties which may be started, to dispute or question the plain doctrine of God's word.

The *absolute necessity* of this submission of the understanding to the authority of God's revelation is most evident. A man cannot be a Christian without it; since all the doctrines which by way of distinction are called Christian, have confessedly great difficulties in them. From our fall in Adam, to the complete salvation of the soul by Christ at the last day, there is abundant room to cavil, if men choose to erect themselves into judges upon the counsel of God. A small degree of wit with much pride, will furnish endless matter for

arraigning the Scripture in its account of the origin of our misery; in the character it gives of the Redeemer and his incarnation, in the way of receiving benefit from him; in the Spirit's influence on the heart; in the penalty denounced upon every degree of disobedience, and the punishment of the damned. These several important articles of our creed, which are the very soul of Christianity, must be received upon the mere credit of their voucher, the word of God. And those who disdain to be persuaded by such evidence, do in fact give up the faith of Christ, though it may be convenient for them to retain the name of Christians, and to remain in the bosom of Christ's church.

Lastly, Self-denial must be exercised with respect to our opinion of our OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS; a severer instance of mortification to all than any yet mentioned. But it must be submitted to. Whatever our good qualities are, we must confess ourselves criminals before God, whose condemnation would be inevitable, should he execute justice instead of shewing compassion towards us. How is it possible we can honour the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, as God would have it honoured, if we imagine our goodness can absolve us from guilt? how can we flee for refuge to the Saviour, unless our hearts condemn us as lost without his merit? or how abide in this city of refuge, unless we perceive ourselves exposed to the avenger of blood? how can we bow down in self-abasing gratitude to God, for imputing to us the righteousness of another, if we renounce not our own as utterly insufficient to answer for us? how place our full dependence on the beloved of the Father for acceptance through him, unless we are conscious of the defilement of our corrupt nature

cleaving to us to the very last moment of life on earth, and rendering us in ourselves unworthy of notice from God?

Upon all these accounts it is a necessary part of Christian self-denial to renounce all confidence in our own virtues and attainments, as if they could justify us in the sight of God, or bear the trial of his holy law. This kind of self-denial, directly opposite to every earth-born system of religion, is of the essence of the religion of Jesus. And though this very humbling estimation of our moral excellence be most difficult to attain, yet Scripture both by example and doctrine, strongly urges it upon us. Thus Job, in the bitterness of self-reproach, cries out, *Behold, I am vile, I abhor myself.* Upon inquiry into the character of this complainer against himself, we learn that he had no equal in goodness upon the whole earth, even in the judgment of the Omniscient; but the fault which he here bewailed, and the guilt that extorted this confession, was too high an opinion of his own character; he had said, *I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.* Job xxxiii. 9. For thus over-rating his spiritual attainments Job abhors himself. And who, after Job, that receives the Scripture record, shall think himself less sullied in his character, or less defective in point of practical holiness, than this illustrious servant of God?

What Job was in old time, St. Paul appears to have been under the New Testament. For who in labours or in sufferings for the glory of God and the good of man; who in purity of heart, and extensive usefulness, was to be compared to him? Yet so far was this most distinguished saint from confiding in his own goodness

as a fit object of the divine complacency, that he mentions both what he had attained in moral and religious obedience, and what he had suffered for Christ's sake, on purpose that he might pour contempt upon it all; that he might call it *loss and dung* in comparison of being found in Christ, *not having* his *own righteousness, which is of the law,* that is, not trusting in his own personal obedience for justification before God, *but* having *that* righteousness *which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* Philip. iii. 9.

What these and others of the most excellent of the earth, by their own confession, declare in discouragement of human righteousness, as a title to justification before God, or as a ground of self-conceit, is confirmed by many places of Scripture. Thus the poor and needy are represented as the only objects of the Redeemer's grace,* while the good and virtuous in their own sight, *are scattered in the proud imaginations of their hearts, and sent empty away.* Luke i. 51. Lowliness of mind, is described as the only temper becoming our Christian profession; while the haughtiness which prompts men to plead their own righteousness as a title to God's favour, is exposed as the cause of excluding from salvation those who had even a zeal for God. Rom. x.

Both by doctrine and example, therefore, the disciple of Jesus is led to call himself vile in the midst of his highest attainments, and constantly to regard himself as a needy impotent vessel of mercy, who has no-

* Psalm lxxii. 13.

thing to boast of but the name of the Lord, and no ground of confidence towards God, but HIS righteousness only.

Such is Christian self-denial: compare it in this extensive view with what either enthusiasm or superstition have, under that name, enjoined; and the contrast is striking indeed! How frivolous and despicable is it to make self-denial (as weak enthusiasts do) consist in the shape or colour of our clothes, in demure looks and precise behaviour, or *only* in abstaining from fashionable diversions! These things hypocrites may do, and shine as patterns of such mortification, while self, in its worst tempers, is fully indulged. The self-denial which stern superstition enjoins, is worse: it imprisons for life men and women, endued with active powers, and formed for society; it makes them move like clock-work in a round of religious rites; it clothes them with sackcloth, and orders them to practise many useless severities upon the body; it calls them to desert the station in which Providence had fixed their lot, and buries even the excellencies they possess in a cloister and a cell.

Examined by the rule of Scripture, how mistaken, how pitiable, how unprofitable is the zeal of such devotees!—On the contrary, what a correct understanding, what fortitude of mind, what personal and public benefits are conspicuous in *Christian* self-denial! It teaches us to use the abundance of meats and drinks given us by divine bounty, without any abuse of them; thus confronting by our example, and severely condemning, all excess. It becomes the source and guardian of domestic peace and happiness: regulates the more unruly passions, and induces habits of

purity and moderation. It enables us to carry on trade without covetousness, though every incitement to that sordid passion surround us. In the reciprocal exercise of tender affection between dearest relations and friends, it secures the supreme love of the heart for God. It emboldens us to avow his cause, and adhere to it, in contempt of our worldly interest, our honour, and our character. It teaches us to sacrifice our prying curiosity, and our desire of comprehending fully the truths of God before we believe them, to the veneration we owe his oracles. And after an intrepid venture of all for his sake, it requires us, instead of eyeing with self-complacency our moral excellence, to cry, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!*

This extensive, this most noble self-denial, is sufficient.—Away then with the unnatural life of the convent; away with the inventions of will-worship, silence, and total solitude, iron girdles, and the coarsest food; away with whimsical singularities in dress, and the fashion of the exterior man, which enthusiasts so vehemently affect. It is far severer self-denial to mortify every evil and corrupt desire natural to the heart. It is more courageous to fight till we die, than flee from the battle. It is more profitable to mankind to shine a light before their eyes, than to be immured with a select company, as if piety could not live in the commerce of the world. And it is infinitely more for the glory of Christ, that the new heart and new spirit which he hath given should be known and seen of all men, than be buried in perpetual concealment. Most useful, honourable, and excellent, are they

who deny all the cravings of corrupt self, in the midst of forbidden objects. They, and they alone, prove the efficacy of the Saviour's prayer in their behalf: *Father, take them not out of the world, but keep them from the evil.**

* See Prayer the *Eighteenth*.

SUNDAY XXXIV. CHAPTER XXXIV.

On Prayer—its Object, Nature, and Subject.

WHENEVER the practice and tempers essential to believers in Christ Jesus are explained, many, instead of attempting to acquire them, object, If these be absolutely requisite, who then shall be saved? But there is really no place for this desponding objection in the Christian scheme; because, though the natural weakness and corruption of man be much greater than such objectors believe, still the obedience required as the fruit of faith, grows from a root which is able to produce it: for such light and power are promised by God to all who properly seek them, as are very adequate to maintain all Christian tempers in the measure indispensably required.

The means, which must be diligently used in order to obtain the continuance of these supernatural supplies, are by way of distinction called *Devotional Duties*; and they are so essential to religion, that it cannot subsist without them. Their importance is indeed

generally allowed, yet through sad abuse these exercises are frequently turned into a mere religious formality, by which God is dishonoured, nominal Christians lulled into a false peace, and the profane hardened in their contempt of devotion.

To guard against this error, so pernicious to the Christian church, I shall treat at large on the *nature of devotional duties,* and the proper method of discharging them; principally confining myself to treat of *secret prayer,* and *reading the word of God;* leaving it to the reader to apply what is said of them to all the other public ordinances and means of grace.

1. With respect to PRAYER, the *object* of it is God only. The end of prayer is, to obtain deliverance or preservation from evil, or the possession and continuance of good. Our application therefore must be made to him, who is the almighty Source of every good and perfect gift; who orders all things according to the counsel of his own will; who, in spite of all opposition can completely bless us; and without whose favour every being in the whole creation, though leagued in our defence, could afford us no protection. He also to whom prayer is addressed must be omniscient and omnipresent. Otherwise, how is it possible that amidst so many constant supplicants none should be overlooked; amidst so many millions of petitions offered up in the same instant throughout the world, none be lost; amidst such a numberless variety of complicated cases, the things best for each individual, and those only, should be conferred. The most transcendent mercy and love also ought to be inherent in him to whom we offer our prayers, in order

to forgive our sins, to overcome our fears, and to encourage our petitions, conscious as we must be of our own vileness, when we are most fit to pray.

It thus appears from the nature of things, that God alone can, on account of his essential perfections, be the object of true prayer. We find him therefore constantly represented in Scripture under this most glorious character: *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.* Psalm lxv. 1, 2. *I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other gods but me: thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bown down to them, nor worship them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God.* Exod. xx. 4, 5.

A truth this so plain, so important, and so often repeated in Scripture, that it calls for our astonishment as well as our lamentation to see the monstrous corruption of worship introduced by popish innovations. The papists, instead of making God the only object of their trust, have besides him innumerable angels and saints in heaven, in whom, they tell us, we are to repose confidence; to whom we are to address our prayers, not only for temporal blessings, but for the pardon of our sins, for our increase of grace, and even for the gift of eternal life. They tell us, that there are in heaven particular advocates for all exigencies and occasions, protectors against all sorts of dangers and diseases, patrons for all graces and virtues. They tell us, that we are to apply to these patrons, without presuming upon every occasion to make our

immediate address to God or the Redeemer, who is God over all blessed for ever.

In complete confutation of this horrid superstition, it is enough to know what perfections are requisite in him who is the proper object of our prayer. For, if almighty power, omniscience, omnipresence, and the most transcendent mercy, be essential to such an object, then what can be more absurd or more impious to call on those for help, who by nature are no gods; who are so limited in the excellencies imparted to them, as to be necessarily incapable of knowing what we want, or of bestowing what we ask?

To follow exactly the Scripture plan, as we ought to do, the tenour of our prayer should be generally * addressed to the Father, in dependence upon the merit and intercession of the Son, and the influence and grace of the Holy Spirit.

By this manner of address the distinct part which each person of the blessed and undivided Trinity bears in the salvation of sinners is justly acknowledged; to the inviolable holiness of God due homage is paid; and our guilt, even in our best state, is humbly confessed. These are points of such moment, that all Scripture labours to impress them on our minds.

* I say *generally*, for there are *numerous* instances of prayer addressed to Jesus Christ. The disciples prayed to him, *Lord, increase our faith*—the dying malefactor to save his soul. St. Stephen, with his dying breath, commended himself into his hands. St. Paul besought him thrice to take away the thorn in his flesh, and styles him Lord over all, rich in mercy to all that *call* upon him; for, whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. These are precedents (never to be set aside) proving that each member of the Christian church may and will say as Thomas did unto Jesus, *My Lord, and my God!*

2. Now as God is the only *object* of prayer, so *its nature* consists in offering up to him the wants of the heart. Unless the heart is engaged, the best chosen petitions, punctually repeated morning and evening out of a book, or the most fluent addresses in language of our own conception, are no more than the mimickry of prayer; a sort of devotion, which pride and self-sufficiency can practise; on which formality and superstition can erect their absurd pretences to religion, while the spirit and the truth of prayer are unexperienced and neglected. For as the needy only can stoop to ask the relief of alms, so then only can we begin to pray when we feel ourselves necessitous creatures; when we long to receive from God what we beg of him, knowing that without the gift of it we must be miserable.

This sense of our real want, both *Scriptural representations* and *Scriptural examples* prove essential to true prayer. The Scriptural representations instruct us thus; *If thou shalt seek the Lord, thou shalt find him; if thou seekest him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.* Deut. iv. 9. *Trust in God at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him.* Psalm lxii. 8. *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.* Psalm cxlv. 18. When the inspired Solomon exhorts us to pray for spiritual wisdom, he takes care to mark, with the utmost energy of expression, the need we must at the same time feel of it in our hearts: *If thou criest,* saith he, *after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures.* Prov. ii. 3, 4. The same feeling of our wants our Lord points out as essential to

prayer, describing it by the united terms of asking, seeking, knocking; terms most expressive of an urgent need of immediate succour. And St. James leads us to the very same conception of the thing, by ascribing success to *fervent* prayer. James v. 16.

What the Scripture thus defines to be prayer, is fully illustrated by the *practice* of the most approved servants of God recorded in it. They were penetrated with a feeling of their necessities when they came before the throne of grace. *With my whole heart,* saith one, *have I sought thy favour. At evening, and at morning, and at noon day will I cry unto thee, and that instantly,* saith David, *and thou shalt hear me.* Another makes his supplication with all the heartfelt importunity of a distressed petitioner; *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.* In the address also of Daniel the greatly beloved, every syllable breathes a sense of want, which scarcely knows how to endure denial or delay; *O Lord,* saith he, *hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, hearken and do, defer not for thy name's sake, O my God.*

From this scriptural representation of prayer, that it is the want of the heart offered up to God, it appears plain, that *all men naturally stand upon a level with respect to their ability of praying truly.* Outward circumstances in this case make no difference. The ignorant clown and the polished scholar: those who have been most piously trained: and those who have been miserably neglected in their education: those who have been restrained from sinful excesses: and those who have plunged deepest into them: remain alike incapable, without the grace of God, of real prayer. Not-

withstanding the grossest ignorance, the worst education, and the most profligate life, yet as soon as ever the guilt, the strength, and tyranny of sin, are felt to oppress the soul, we shall flee to God for refuge, and prayers and cries, like incense, will ascend up before him from the troubled and the humbled heart. On the contrary, if the guilt, the strength, and defilement of sin are not felt and lamented, neither learning, nor the most pious education, nor abstinence from every gross vice, nor even all these united, can create the least measure of the spirit of prayer. In many instances these advantages flatter and blind with their specious appearance, instead of producing any just sense of the guilt of sin, or any alarming apprehension of its issue, unless pardoned and subdued. In fact, all true knowledge, and all just apprehensions of sin, wherever found, are owing to an infinitely higher cause: they are the effect of a firm belief in God's word declaring the sinfulness of sin, and a heart humbled so as to plead guilty to the charge of it. But this firm belief of God's word, and this conviction of sin, are in no instance the fruits of education, much less the effect of learning, but the inestimable gifts of God: gifts no sooner received than all impediments to prayer are removed. Want will immediately make the stammering tongue of the most unlearned, or of those who have been in time past the most abominably wicked, speak plain enough in their addresses to God. Want will make the heart, which was before too gross to conceive any excellency in the things of God, seek after them with strong cries and lasting importunity. And whatever difference a good understanding, a pious education, or general abstinence from vice (which

are, on other accounts, invaluable blessings) may make in the matter of confession, in the degree of guilt, or in the choice of devout phrases, still the prayer, by which God is honoured and the soul blessed, will be exactly the same in the little sinner as in the great, in the poor as in the rich, in the very lowest and weakest of the people, as in the most accomplished preacher of God's truth.

May this scriptural account of the nature of true prayer undeceive those who presume that they stand accepted with God merely on account of their multiplying exercises of devotion; while at the same time, instead of feeling themselves the poor, guilty, impotent creatures their own prayers represent them to be, they swell with conceit of superior excellence, or fancy themselves righteous, because they pray so punctually after their formal manner! May this encourage all who are humble and contrite, to pour out their complaints before God when they feel their own vileness, though their utterance and their knowledge may be in the sight of man very contemptible, and their past lives may have been awfully profligate! May this also convince the poor, there can be no excuse more frivolous than to pretend they cannot pray, because destitute of book-learning; since, in fact, nothing but contempt of God's written word, nothing but denial of the truth of our own condition as represented in it, can leave either learned or unlearned under such hardness of heart, as to feel no want of grace, mercy, and salvation of God, and consequently to remain incapable of real prayer.

We may observe further, from the very nature of prayer, as it means the offering up the wants of the

heart to God, that whenever there is any real concern for salvation, it *cannot be confined only to certain set and stated times.* It will be found in the midst of our business, and when we are in company, as well as when we are alone and retired to our closet: frequent ejaculations, known only to Him who searcheth the heart, will discover what our desire is, and will prove that we feel the want of "the one thing needful."

3. From the *nature* of prayer, we are led to *consider the subject of it,* or what it is we are to ask of God. Certainly it must be what it becomes him to supply, what we are warranted by his own word to request, and assured by his own promise either absolutely, or with some limitation, that he will grant.

We may ask *temporal* blessings: for instance, ease when we are racked with pain, health when taken off from our employment by languishing sickness, or maintenance when we are left destitute. We may ask the continuance of our own lives and those of our dearest relations when sick, or in danger of death. For each of these benefits, prayer may be made to God, because instances of each kind are recorded in Scripture; because by prayer for them God is exalted as the sovereign Lord both of life and all its comforts; our dependence upon him as such is confirmed, and our gratitude towards him is increased.

But though we may pray for any of these benefits, we must always do it with entire submission to the will of God, whether he sees it best to give, to continue, or remove them. We should always remember that things of this kind are not promised without limitation, but only upon condition that they are for our good, and for the glory of God. We should ask for them

with a sense upon our hearts, that ease, health, maintenance, friends, and life itself, are things unspeakably mean, compared to spiritual and eternal blessings.

Blessings of a *spiritual* and *eternal* nature must therefore make up the principal subject matter of the prayer of Christians. Let them request more knowledge of the Lord that bought them, more dependence upon his name, pardon of their sins through his blood, mortification of their vile affections through his Spirit, and a more perfect conformity to his example.

These are the things in general of which all Christians feel their want; which they pursue with a persevering ardour of mind, and wait daily upon God to receive from him in a more abundant measure.

But besides this *general* matter of prayer, common to the whole church of Christ, each private Christian finds *particular* matter of prayer suggested from his own peculiar trials, from the changing frame of his own mind, from the appointments of God's providence in his external condition. Every alteration in each of these particulars produces some inward, correspondent change in the man. By consequence, as real prayer is the want of the heart offered up to God, the matter of prayer which may be very proper to-day, may be quite unsuitable to our case to-morrow; and those petitions which in certain circumstances were sufficient, in opposite ones will be found greatly defective. The private matter therefore of prayer in Christians, must take its mould from the objects and occurrences around us, and the impressions these make upon us. For, as different temptations present themselves, different will be the inward actings of corruption: sometimes it will be felt in the risings of pride, envy, and self-pre-

ference; at others in discontent and peevishness; now in a propensity to lust and impurity; then in the love of money or of praise, in evil surmises or uncharitable censures. According to these frequent and most important variations, our petitions must be adapted for pardon, and the immediate succours of grace.

Particular assistances are also needful according to our station in life, and the peculiar snares to which we are from thence exposed. The rich and the noble are liable to dangers from which others are free; men of trade and merchandise have very much to fear from their employments; whilst pastors and teachers, in order to be innocent and pure from the blood of those committed to their charge, stand in need of extraordinary wisdom, zeal, and love. It is therefore by no means sufficient that we ask chiefly for spiritual blessings, or seek in general for the things we are taught to ask, and which God has promised to give, unless we also particularly specify what we want; unless we derive our petitions, not only from the Bible, or a knowledge of the things necessary for men, but from our own sense and feeling: for if the state of our hearts does not thus dictate the matter of our secret prayer, there is little reason to believe that our corruption gives us any real concern, or that they are confessed with true humiliation. If they were, we should so feel them as to make a particular mention of them, and implore forgiveness; and little ground is there to hope those iniquities will be subdued in us, which do not appear odious enough to ourselves to excite particular requests to God to be delivered from them.

Besides we cannot take a more effectual method to

guard against formality in prayer, than by making its contents arise out of our present condition; than by making it a simple constant application to God for the supply of our own peculiar wants and necessities. And though very few, comparatively speaking, have ability to adapt the matter of prayer to their particular circumstances in the presence and hearing of others, yet every one is sufficiently qualified to do this alone before his God, who seeth in secret: because in this case, frequent hesitations are not in the least either detrimental or inconvenient; nor phrases, at which men might be apt to take offence, improper when meant well. The same God who prepares the heart to call upon him, will hearken thereto.*

* See Prayer the *Nineteenth.*

SUNDAY XXXV. CHAPTER XXXV.

The Necessity of Prayer.

THE *object,* the *nature,* and the *subject* of true prayer have already been considered: but ignorance, alas! in this case is but the weakest obstacle with which we have to contend; the natural profaneness of the human heart, and its aversion to every truly spiritual exercise, are far more difficult to overcome. However for this purpose let us consider in what manner the holy Scripture expresses the *necessity* of prayer.

It is enforced there by the *practice of the most venerable persons;* it is laid down as the indispensable *means of obtaining grace;* it is required by the *express command of* the Lord God Almighty.

It is *enforced by the most venerable names;* for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David, Daniel, Peter, and Paul, in a word, all those who stand the highest of the human race for their excellency in the sight of God, were most eminent and abundant in the exercise of prayer; by this their graces were enlivened and brightened to superior lustre. Now their diligence in prayer is recorded, not for their sakes, to give them the trifling honour of a posthumous fame, but for substantial use, as patterns which we are to copy; that if we hope to dwell with them in the end, we should walk in their good paths, and be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. So that while we have any real reverence for the word of God, it is impossible we should neglect and think slightly of a duty, which was of such unspeakable importance in the judgment of the chief saints of God.

But if the example of all the Scripture *saints* proves the necessity of prayer, how much more the practice of *the Saviour,* before the brightness of whose glory, prophets, apostles, and martyrs are eclipsed, as the stars in the firmament by the rising sun. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners; nevertheless prayer still employed a considerable portion of his time. Fatigued as he was wont to be by travelling from place to place to preach the Gospel, and thronged by crowds who pressed upon him to hear the gracious words which proceeded out of his lips, always therefore in need of the rest of the whole

night; yet would he sometimes rise up a great while before it was day, to retire to a mountain or solitary place apart to pray; sometimes the moon and stars beheld him through the whole night an earnest supplicant and devout intercessor, whilst the rest of the world were taking their full rest in their beds.

After this record can any one, professing himself a Christian, admit a doubt of the absolute necessity of prayer? If the master of the house, who had no guile, nor slightest stain of depravity, prayed, how much more must they of his household, who are both weak and wicked? If the Lord from heaven, when he took upon him our flesh, lifted up his eyes and prayed, how much more must his servants? Should any one imagine himself excused from this duty, what stronger reproof need be given to his audacious impiety, than to reply, The prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, Jesus himself, our Redeemer, prayed: whom makest thou thyself?

Further, The universal necessity of prayer will appear still more evident by proving it to be the *indispensable mean of obtaining mercy and grace.* Houses and possessions, honours and titles, health and long life, with all the glittering advantages the world covets, are given promiscuously, as much to those who never bend the knee to God, as to those who diligently seek him. But it is not so with any blessing pertaining to the life and salvation of the soul. God never pardons sin, or delivers from its accursed tyranny, till prayer is made for such inestimable benefit. The unchangeable ordinance of heaven runs thus, *If thou shalt pray unto God, he shall be favourable unto thee.*

Job xxxiii. 26. *Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy;* but observe to whom; not to all persons indiscriminately, not to the profane, not to the self-sufficient, but *unto all them that call upon thee.* Psalm lxxxv. 5.—Omniscient and full of compassion as the Lord Jehovah is, he takes no cognizance of our spiritual necessities to supply them, or of our dangers to interpose and save us from them, till by prayer and supplication we make our requests known unto him. *Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.* Jer. xxxiii. 3. Our Redeemer in the fullest manner teaches us that prayer is the necessary mean of obtaining mercy and finding grace to help, when he gives us this exhortation; *Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.* Which is as much as to affirm, that without asking, seeking, and knocking, we can receive of God no spiritual blessing. By consequence, not to pray, and to remain utterly destitute of any share in the blessings which accompany salvation, is one and the same thing.

Every one therefore who despises this channel in which God sees fit to convey to the soul its necessary supplies for eternal life, through a confidence in the sufficiency of his own strength, in the excellency of his virtues, or in the finished work of Christ, must unavoidably remain under the power and guilt of sin. His fancied goodness, in which he confides, will necessarily be scanty and partial: some ruling passion will still prevail over him, witnessing the impossibility of attaining real righteousness without divine aid. Thus you may frequently observe a profane man, who

prides himself in his moral worth, and pours contempt upon devotional duties, miserably chagrined by every trifling disappointment, or for the least fancied provocation breathing revenge. You may frequently observe a contemner of prayer, who is much caressed, and self-applauded for good-nature and humanity, studiously injuring virgin innocence, for the gratification of corrupt animal appetites. Too often also you may see a warm advocate for the doctrines of grace, and the honour of Christ, deceitful, covetous, and a slave to sin, through an habitual neglect of prayer. The truth is, that the union of all virtues is wholly owing to the grace of God given to the prayer of faith; therefore he only of all the children of men can pay a uniform obedience, who goes out of himself, and places his dependence upon the aids of grace promised and given to him that asks for them.

Lastly, The absolute necessity of prayer is put out of all doubt by *the plain command of God.* No man is left at liberty whether he will pray or no, or allowed to neglect prayer, without suffering any other loss than the want of those supplies he might procure by it. He who does not pray, contracts additional guilt, and sets at defiance the ordinance of God; since he has not more expressly required us to shew mercy to our fellow-creatures, than to worship himself. We are taught, that *men ought always to pray, and to continue in prayer.* In vain therefore do we plead a strict regard to the substantial duties of temperance, of justice, and of mercy, as any exemption from the obligation of prayer. To do so, is actually to live in the commission of the basest theft, defrauding our God of his

due, by refusing to render to him that tribute of prayer which he demands. With equal reason, and with as little affront to him, may we refuse to obey his law in being just to men, as refuse to honour him by real prayer.

This contempt of God, expressed by neglecting prayer for his favour, grace, and Spirit, is a sin, which no excellencies that the world applauds, can at all compensate. Like rebellion in the state, wherever it is, it cancels all pretences to any good qualities. As the kings of the earth do not acquit a rebel, though rebellion may be his only crime, much less does the King of kings, whose name is jealous, overlook contumely thrown upon himself, because the person guilty of it abstains from fraud and injustice towards men. To imagine God will overlook such an affront, is to entertain the most frivolous idea of the divine character: it is with the Epicureans of old, to enthrone God in heaven indeed, but at the same time to regard him as quite indifferent whether he is held in reverence or in contempt on earth. But such a God is no more like the God of the Christians, than Baal or Moloch are. The God of the Christians is a God jealous and terrible: jealous, not to allow his honour to be given to another, or denied to himself; terrible, to avenge himself on his adversaries, who withhold that homage which appertains to him as the Lord of the universe, in whom we all live, and move, and have our being. This God hath commanded his servants and messengers, by every form of expression that can engage the attention, to teach men, that to serve him with godly fear and reverence is the one thing needful. By consequence, a despiser and neglecter of prayer, though

adorned with all the amiable qualities the world can admire, still wants that which must hallow his generosity, his benevolence, and all that is extolled as virtue. For though social good qualities are idolized by the multitude, they weigh nothing in the balance of the sanctuary, unless they spring from religious affections: *For them that honour me,* says the Almighty, *I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* 1 Sam. ii. 30. In other words, nothing shall excuse or palliate the guilt of attempting to supersede the necessity of devotional duties, by affecting to magnify moral honesty and social virtues as the sum and substance of man's duty.

The profane indeed attempt to vindicate themselves in a neglect of prayer, by attempting to sublimer ideas of true religion than those who are governed by the simple declarations of God's own word. "The Su-"preme Being," say they, "knows all things; what "need is there then for us to tell him our wants? He "is loving unto every man, therefore he will give us, "without our request, that which is upon the whole "best for us: he lays not a stress upon our making "many prayers: pure and undefiled religion before "him, is to do justice and love mercy."

From the confidence of this assertion one would be tempted to suppose, that the persons who make it perfectly knew the mind of God; when, in fact, it is not probable that they should have any just knowledge of it. For as skill in human sciences is only to be acquired by application to them, so the knowledge of God is only to be obtained by prayer and by meditation on his own revelation of himself; both which

these totally neglect: therefore professing themselves wise, they betray the most guilty and absurd ignorance in these objections against the necessity of prayer. If indeed we are called upon to pray, in order to inform God of what he knew not before, or to excite in him a benevolence to which his heart was a stranger till our petitions gave it birth, then the objections would be as pertinent and conclusive as they are common in the mouths of the profane. But how vain do they appear, when it is considered that our very encouragement to pray is the previous assurance that God knows all our wants, and that because he loves us, therefore he will hear us.

The absolute necessity then of prayer remains indisputably on the grounds already mentioned, namely, as having been the *practice of the saints of* God and of the Saviour himself—as the *indispensable mean of obtaining grace*—as being *enjoined by God's express command.* To these may be added one argument more, that there is no other way to *preserve* in our mind a clear knowledge of our own wants, a lasting sense of our entire dependence upon God, or a lively gratitude for his mercies, than by such a solemn constant representation of our desires and necessities before him, as is always done in real prayer. The conclusion therefore is evident, that neither the multiplicity of business, nor the practice of social duties must be pleaded, either in justification of a contempt of prayer, or in excuse for praying seldom or coldly. Prayer must be habitually fervent and persevering. Whatever the world at large may do, thus must every real believer in Jesus worship and serve the God of his salvation.*

* See Prayer the *Nineteenth.*

SUNDAY XXXVI. CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Requisites of true Prayer, and its Success.

WE have taken a view of the *object,* the *nature,* the *matter,* and the *necessity* of prayer: what further relates to this important subject respects the *requisites* of true prayer, and its infallible *success,* where they are found.

1. The first requisite in acceptable prayer, is a *real intention to observe and do what God commands.* For if, out of regard to worldly interest, or for the sake of some evil gratification, we refuse to submit to his authority, flattering ourselves that multiplied devotions, or obedience in all points, except where the darling iniquity interferes, is sufficient; then our prayers, instead of finding acceptance, will be resented as the highest provocation. For what can be more base than for a man to pretend to honour God by prayer, while he is giving the most substantial proof of real contempt of him in his wilful disobedience? What can be more offensive than to pretend to implore pardon when we are determined not to give up sin; or to entreat to be set at liberty, as if we were unwillingly enslaved, when we really love our bondage? If we thus regard iniquity in our heart, though we make many prayers, the Lord will not hear us; though we are most passionate in our devotions, he will hide his face from us: *for God heareth not sinners; but if any*

man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

It must however be observed with peculiar caution in this place, that no one, though in actual subjection to sin, ought on this account to be discouraged from praying, provided he longs for deliverance from it; for at the throne of grace it is that he must receive this blessing. Nor is any one unqualified to make acceptable prayer to God, though during his first seeking his favour the combat with old sins is severe and dubious; and he may be once and again hurried into his former wickedness. In this case, if the sinner finds shame, sorrow, and self-abhorrence, with a desire, notwithstanding the dreadful power of his corruptions, to serve God in truth, he is immediately to make his complaint to him more bitterly, and to bewail his miserable bondage more deeply: and then he will know there is a God, who looketh down from heaven to hear the groanings of such as are in captivity to their sins, and to deliver the souls in their own apprehension appointed unto death. Nay, where relapses are frequent, though it is indeed a deplorable condition, yet let not prayer be discontinued; for this would be forsaking our remedy and giving up all hope. Wherever any really strive against sin, with undissembled prayer for deliverance as well as mercy, I would encourage such to maintain the fight, and to persevere in their humiliations, for they have assurance from the promises of God, that he will hear their cry, and will help them.

2. A second requisite in prayer is *humility*. We must pray under a sense of our guilt and of our depravity, as well as of our weakness and wants. We

must pray with self-abasing sentiments, conscious that we are not worthy to lift up our eyes to God, much less to receive from him pardon, peace, and salvation: we must pray as mere suppliants for mercy, who would have no cause at all to complain of injustice, if our sin were avenged upon us. Great stress is laid in Scripture upon this humiliation in prayer: *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit!* Psalm xxxiv. 18.—And when the divine Majesty is described with all possible sublimity, this requisite of an acceptable worshipper is specified: *Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* Isai. lvii. 15. St. James also very strongly urges the necessity of this humiliation: he addresses himself to those who were formalists in devotion; constant enough in their prayers, but very easy and thoughtless about their guilt. After reproving them therefore for asking amiss, that they might consume it upon their lusts, he directs them to a successful manner of praying: *God,* says he, *resisteth the proud; but giveth grace unto the humble. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,* that is, with the lowest prostration and self-abasement confess your guilt and your desert in his sight, *and he shall lift you up.* James iv. 9, 10.

3. This sense of our own vileness must accompany our prayer in opposition to Pharisaic self-conceit; and in proof of our abiding consciousness that we can

never be justified before God through our own works. But with this humiliation must be joined an *affiance in God,* and a holy boldness in approaching him. When we ask, we must not fluctuate between hope and despondency, but assure ourselves that we shall be as certainly succoured, and as certainly enriched with all that our souls need, as if the power and blessings we implore were already in our possession. For instance, when we confess our sin with sorrow, shame, and humiliation, begging for mercy through the atonement, we must be fully persuaded that we do obtain mercy. When we pray for the mastery over our natural corruptions, we must assure ourselves they shall be subdued. When in perplexity of mind and in great tribulation, we beg of God support and deliverance, we must not entertain a fear that perhaps he will not hear us. For by giving way to distrust, questionings, and jealousies whether God will perform the gracious promises which he hath made to the poor and needy, we greatly dishonour him, and in the very act of solemn address to him as the Almighty, betray a disbelief of his veracity, or power, or love to them that call on his name.

For this cause we are warned in Scripture to take heed, that when we come to God in prayer we resist every doubt that may arise about his relieving our wants. *Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God,* that is, depend upon his almighty power for the performance of every thing that he encourages you to expect from him: *For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he*

*saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith;** that is, how great soever any difficulty may seem, which you have to overcome, in the way of duty, even though it were as unlikely to be effected as that you should root up a mountain by a word of command, it shall be brought to pass, provided that ye have an humble and unshaken trust in the divine power and promises. And in proof that this confidence in prayer was not to be peculiar to the apostles, but a necessary requisite in all Christians, St. James gives us this unchangeable direction to the Christian church;

If any one of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. James i. 5, 6, 7.

From these passages it appears that affiance in God is a principal qualification in acceptable prayer; that we ought to have recourse to God with the same liberty and confidence as to a father, a brother, or a bosom friend. The delightful communion carried on between him and believers is therefore thus emphatically expressed: *We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;* † that is, the law of worship and submission to the eternal Majesty is softened into a holy familiarity, and converted, through the abundant ma-

* Mark xi. 22, 23. † Rom. viii. 15, 16.

nifestations of his grace, into a sweet and child-like dependence upon his care and love for us.

4. It is indeed difficult to conceive how such confidence in God, such assurance of receiving from him whatever we ask for the good of our souls, can consist with a consciousness of our own vileness; or how we can conquer the fear that must arise from a sense of the multitude of our defects, so as not to ask with a faltering tongue. This difficulty is removed by another grand requisite of prayer, without which it can have no success: I mean the offering it up to God in *dependence on the sacrifice, righteousness, and intercession of Jesus,* as the great High-priest of his church.

By this we acknowledge that our own duties are so far from having any merit to procure for us a favourable regard from God, that we do not even presume to offer to him his due homage without having respect to our accepted surety, the all-perfect Mediator between God and man. By this we confess, that the death of Jesus for our transgressions in vindication of the justice of God, and his appearance in heaven as our Intercessor, are our encouragement to draw nigh to God in full assurance of faith, notwithstanding the absolute purity of his nature, and the tokens of his indignation against sin.

And when Jesus is thus our hope, and his atoning blood and righteousness all our confidence, we can see that there is no room for confusion or distrust, notwithstanding our own vileness. He is ordained of God for this very purpose to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. Both by office and by love he stands engaged to mediate in favour of all who come to God by him, and to accomplish all their just and

lawful desires. The command from heaven therefore is express that we should, in consideration of his character and office, *come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Heb. iv. 16.

The offering up of our prayers in the name of Christ is so necessary a requisite, that to omit it, is a capital offence in the sight of God. Should any man dare to say or think thus with himself: "The essential "mercy of God is a sufficient encouragement to me "to pray: I esteem it a disparagement to his good-"ness to apply to him by a mediator: I need no one "to intercede for me, nor will I be beholden to any "thing but my own good qualities and fitness for par-"don to make my peace with God, and to give accep-"tance to my devotions." Prayer offered up by him upon such principles, would be as little acceptable as if he had made supplications to an idol. It would be an open censure of the divine method of saving sinners and rebels: it would be a dethroning, as far as lies in man's power, the Son of God from that high office of unspeakable benevolence which he sustains and discharges in heaven for his church: it would be loading the revelation of God with scorn: because the most conspicuous and important doctrine in it, is undoubtedly this, that Jesus Christ is the one Mediator between God and man, an Advocate for us with the Father, and a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood, that God might be just, and yet the justifier of all that believe in Jesus.

There is an absolute necessity therefore that in all our approaches to God, we should honour the Son even as we honour the Father; that we should solemn-

ly express our need of his favour, and of an interest in his righteousness and intercession, as the way to partake of the Father's love. Nor is it sufficient that we ask merely as disciples of Christ; that is, as those who receive him as a prophet sent from God, without an humble and cordial trust in his atonement and intercession; for such an address, instead of meeting with acceptance, will be rejected as the effect of pride and infidelity reigning in our hearts. For nothing but pride and infidelity can lead us directly to contradict the Scriptures, which peremptorily affirm that there is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved but that of Jesus; and no way of coming to the Father but by him. Nothing but pride and infidelity can lead men to suppose that they may come before God in their own name, provided they really intend to practise moral righteousness, and may be sure that they shall be accepted of God. Were such a doctrine universally to prevail, it must in a short time root the Gospel out of the earth. No wonder therefore that so much stress is laid in holy writ on this as a grand requisite in acceptable prayer, that it be offered up to God in the name of Jesus.

From what has now been laid before you, it appears that a real *intention to obey God*, an *humble sense* of our own polluted condition before him, a *firm assurance* that we shall be heard, and a constant *dependence upon the mediation* of the Lord Jesus Christ, are requisites which must unite in all acceptable prayer. In fact they are found in the prayer of all real believers, though in different degrees: at first faintly, afterwards more distinctly perceptible, and, as they grow in grace, they are more and more conscious that

in this manner they worship the God of their salvation. With the same spirit of true devotion they acknowledge it to be their duty, and they make it their practice to worship God in public as well as in private; and to be punctual in their attendance on every ordinance in which God has promised to meet his faithful people, and to bless them.

Believers are encouraged diligently to use all these means of grace, from the knowledge they have of the certain *success of prayer*. The infallible grounds on which this knowledge is built, are these which follow; the *source of prayer* in the heart of fallen man; the *promises of God;* the *intercession of his Son;* and the *experience* of all the obedient children of God.

1. The success of true prayer is most certain from considering *the source of it in the heart of fallen man*. We are taught in Scripture that we are not sufficient to think a good thought of ourselves; it follows therefore, that no one can feel a real intention to glorify God by uniform obedience, or a holy shame and sorrow for sin; no one can come to God as a child in want to his heavenly Father, or trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, without an actual gift of grace, without a divine influence from the Father. Now can it be supposed that this gift is bestowed in vain? Can it be thought that any one will be so much enlightened from above, as to desire to be kept from every wilful offence, to know, and to live in obedience to the Gospel, and that he will be stirred up in prayer to make request unto God, that he may have power to do so, and yet not be heard? Can such a supplicant fall down on his knees before God, only to rise up covered with confusion at the rejection of his suit? Cer-

tainly not. God, gracious and merciful, is not wont thus to grieve the contrite spirit, or to disappoint the holy expectations excited in the heart by his own divine agency. On the contrary, a real desire of receiving spiritual mercy, is a pledge of obtaining it: for since *every good and every perfect gift,* in every degree of it, *cometh from above, from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, who of his own will begot us by the word of his truth;* we must assuredly conclude, that if he hath inclined our hearts to seek him, he will be found of us. James i. 17, 18.

2. This most comfortable truth is positively established, by many declarations of God's delight to hear and answer all that call upon him. Thus in one place he describes himself as looking into the inmost recesses of the heart, waiting to see the first dawning of prayer, and to answer it before it has put on the direct form of a petition: *And it shall come to pass before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.* Isaiah lxvi. 24. In another, he commands one of his prophets to publish the immediate acceptance of his own petition, the moment he stedfastly purposed to offer it unto him: *I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord, and so thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* Psalm xxxii. 5. And that we might harbour no suspicion of the success of prayer, our Redeemer compares the readiness of God to succour the poor and needy, who call upon him, to that which parents feel with regard to their own offspring: *What man is there,* saith he, *of you, whom if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then being evil* (corrupt and vitiated in

your nature), are still by the force of instinct drawn gladly to supply the necessities of your children, *how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?*

3. If it should be objected, that the undutifulness which the very best men too often manifest towards their heavenly Father, and their violations of his law in time past, may well justify doubts, whether God can hear them consistently with the honour of his perfections; this perplexity is removed by the assurance that Jesus appears, with his own blood, in the presence of God, *as an Intercessor* for all who call upon him in his name. He appears as an advocate in the behalf of the guilty, alleging what satisfies the law, and absolves the humble delinquent. The memorial of his abundant kindness in dying on the cross, is perpetually represented in the presence of God; and the Mediator declares it to be his no less earnest than just request, that, for his sake, the penitent acknowledgments of those who believe on him, and their prayers, should be accepted; their sins blotted out, and increase of grace bestowed upon them; *for he ever liveth to make intercession.*

In the book of the *Revelation,** there is a most magnificent representation of this truth, so very interesting to every member of the church of Christ. The beloved John, we there read, was favoured with a vision of the things which are done in heaven: in this vision he perceived that all the melodious choir of angels ceased from uttering their heart-felt *Allelujahs; There was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour.* But

* ch. viii. 1—5.

wherefore do the praises, for ever and for ever due, cease to ascend before the throne? In order that the whole attention of the heavenly host might be fixed on the angel the messenger of the covenant, who, just as the high-priest on the great day of atonement, was wont to carry a more than usual quantity of incense in a golden censer, and burn it in the holy of holies before the Lord; so now Jesus, the glorious angel of God's presence, appeared as the High-priest of his church, standing in a ministering posture before the altar of burnt-offering, to signify the atonement he had made by his blood. *And there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand;* that is, as the perfuming smoke of incense, composed of the finest spices, ascended up like a cloud to heaven with the prayers of the congregation of Israel that were offered at the same time; so a representation was made here of the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, which mingled like the most fragrant odour with the prayers of holy worshippers, and, like the incense which passed through the hands of the High-priest, was presented together with them before God by the Mediator, to cover their imperfections, and to procure for them the divine audience and acceptance.

And what makes this magnificent representation of our great High-priest a still more encouraging proof of the infallible success of true prayer, is this: It is purposely introduced just before the most desolating judgments are going to be poured out on the apostate unbelieving world. God thus assuring us that when

he whets his glittering sword, and cries, *I will rid myself of my adversaries,* there is not one supplicant, who approaches him by Jesus Christ, who shall have cause to fear his prayers are not answered. How dishonourable then, how injurious both to the Father and the Son, to doubt of the success of prayer! For if, as Jesus declared to his first and immediate followers, *the Father loveth you because ye have loved me, and believed that I came forth from him,* how much more shall those who possess the same precious faith assure themselves they shall be regarded, when there is all the interest and intercession of Jesus at the right hand of God employed in favour of those prayers suggested by the influence of the Holy Ghost?

4. To strengthen our assurance of the success of prayer, nothing further can possibly be added than the confirmation of *fact and experience.* If all who have made their prayer to God in the way he has himself appointed, and for the blessings he has promised, have ever received the things they asked from him, then there cannot be a more complete demonstration of any truth, than of the infallible success of prayer. Now the word of God abounds with proofs of the Almighty's pleasure to make his power as it were tributary to the prayer of his faithful people. Thus the prayer of Joshua stopped the sun in his course, and and that of Elijah, though a man of like passions with ourselves, opened and shut the springs which water the earth. The prayer of the three children preserved them from being hurt in the fiery furnace, and that of Daniel saved him from the devouring lions. The time indeed would fail to mention what we find recorded in Scripture of the wonders wrought through the

power of prayer. Now if, in *extraordinary* cases, for the vindication of God's truth and manifestation of his glory, the effect of prayer was thus miraculous, how much *more* may we conclude it to be effectual, when it only seeks deliverance from sin, and the gift of those graces by which God may be glorified on earth?

There is indeed no age without a cloud of witnesses of the infallible efficacy of prayer. Ask those distinguished persons in our generation, who really conform to the Christian rule, and copy the example of their Lord, what has given them such mastery over their passions, such mild complacency and good-will towards all men, such a readiness to be directed and governed by the word of God through unfeigned love to him and delight in his service, and they will unanimously declare that not by their own power, wisdom, or resolution; not through any original better formation of their tempers, or the advantage of education, but through the grace of God obtained by prayer, they are what they are. They began in earnest, they persevered with importunity in calling upon the Lord, and according to his promise he heard them: they made their application to him, and were not disappointed.*

* Many illustrious confirmations of the prevalence of Christian prayer with God, are to be found in the lives of the excellent of the earth: but a more pleasing and honourable one is scarcely to be met with, than that recorded in the life of the celebrated physician BOERHAAVE. A friend of his who had often admired his patience under the greatest provocations, asked him by what means he had so entirely suppressed that impetuous ungovernable passion, anger? The Doctor answered, with the utmost frankness and sincerity, that naturally he was of a resentful disposition, but by DAILY PRAYER he attained the mastery over himself. *Burton's Life of Boerhaave.* It

On the contrary, there is not a slave to sin within the pale of the Christian church; not one defiled by the lust of uncleanness or the love of money; not one tyrannized over by angry, peevish, or turbulent dispositions, but he is condemned in his own conscience either as an utter despiser of prayer, or as a mere formal trifler in it: such a one, therefore experiences no deliverance from the power of evil tempers, nor gains the least ground against them.

Real Christians therefore must value prayer, and be constant and unwearied in it; so will the same bountiful God, whose ears are ever open to the prayers of his faithful people, open in the end heaven to receive their persons. He will give them an abundant entrance into that kingdom, where petitions will be no more; because neither weakness, nor want, fear, nor trial, will remain, but every feeling of the soul be perfect felicity, and every expression of it perfect praise.*

It was his custom, never violated, to spend the first hour of every day in prayer, though patients from every country in Europe applied to him for advice.

* See Prayer the *Nineteenth*.

SUNDAY XXXVII. CHAPTER XXXVII.

On the Study of the Scripture.

HAVING considered the nature of prayer as a principal exercise of devotion, I now proceed to state another duty equally important, equally bind-

ing upon Christians, and equally necessary to maintain a holy life—*the Study of the holy Scripture.*

As the Scripture was given by inspiration of God, and its great design is to instruct men in the knowledge of him, so it contains repeated commands to search into, and meditate upon, its sacred contents. *These words,* saith God, *which I command thee, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.* Deut. vi. 8, 9. That is, thou shalt most familiarly converse with them, and most carefully treasure them up in thy mind. St. Paul, speaking of the Old Testament, tells us, that *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning and for our admonition.* Of the New Testament we are told, that it was written *that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through his name.* John xx. 31. St. Peter instructs us, that he wrote both his Epistles to *stir up the pure minds of* Christians *by way of remembrance,* and to put them in mind *of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.* 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. Now as these are the ends for which the Scriptures were inspired of God, and directed to us, so do they lay an obligation upon all into whose hands they are put, to acquaint themselves with them. And not to read what God has written and directed to us, is in fact a profane contempt both of his authority and mercy; it looks as if we either thought *him* such an insignificant Being, or ourselves so little to need his information, that it is not worth our while to peruse with care and

frequency the contents of those sacred books, which by his inspired penmen he hath vouchsafed to send us.

Further, the infinite concern which we all have in the subject matter of holy writ, most evidently obliges us to read and acquaint ourselves with it. For what the Scripture contains is, by the unanimous confession of all Christians, of everlasting moment: it proposes articles of faith under the most awful sanctions; eternal life, if we receive them; death eternal, if we reject them. It prescribes a rule of duty essential to our peace, comfort and safety. It holds forth promises exceedingly great, to excite our diligence and encourage our hope, and threatenings of such misery as infinitely exceeds all evil in this world, that at all times we may hear and fear, and never commit iniquity. He therefore who *neglects* to study and search the Scripture, betrays his unbelief and scorn of his Maker; and proves that, like a brute, he only desires what can do his body good.

Indeed, the will of God is so plainly revealed in this matter, that no one but an infidel will justify a total neglect of the Bible. Many, however, who profess to believe in it, read it so carelessly or so seldom, as to rive little advantage from it. Allowance no doubt must be made for different capacities and different situations in life; yet after this allowance too many will still be found guilty of trifling with the word of God. The principal thing which men of all stations should avoid is, a *formal, careless way of reading*. This has been in all ages, a general fault, and a great one indeed; for we may read the Scripture in this way every day of our lives, and be in no degree wiser or

better. To derive spiritual benefit therefore from the Bible, the following rules must necessarily be observed.

1. Whenever we open the sacred book of God, we should *lift up our hearts to him to teach us the true meaning* of what we are going to read. This is necessary, because those doctrines, which are its very glory, offend our natural pride, and its precepts contradict our dearest lusts. To receive the one therefore with humility and thankfulness, and to submit to be governed by the other, requires assistance from heaven, and a blessing from the Father and Fountain of light. Accordingly in the Bible we are frequently taught that we cannot know the excellency of its doctrines, nor rely on them with such a persuasion as to honour God by it, unless he open our understandings; for *no man*, saith St. Paul, *can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* And when the Apostle speaks of those believers in Christ who knew the things which were freely given of God to them, he declares they received *the Spirit which is of God, that they might know them.* So deeply sensible were the holy men of old, of their own natural incapacity of reaping any profitable knowledge from the Scripture without the teachings of God obtained by prayer, that with the Bible open before them they continually made request for illumination of their minds to understand it aright. *I am a stranger upon earth, O hide not thy commandments from me: I am thy servant, give me understanding that I may know thy statutes. Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things in thy law.* These blessed servants of God we must imitate, and depend on the Spirit for light and instruction when we read God's word. Not indeed expecting *new* light, that is, any

new doctrine either *distinct* from the Scripture rule, or *supplemental* to it; nor laying aside our reason and understanding, relying upon an immediate inspiration to interpret Scripture. Either of these things is weak enthusiasm. But with the greatest sobriety we may expect, and ought to pray for the Spirit's help to give us real advantage and improvement while we are reading the word of God. Because the Spirit is promised to abide with the church for ever, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the things of God: nor shall we ever know them so as to feel their power and authority on the heart, without internal illumination.

There is, I readily grant, a knowledge of Scripture truths, which men of parts and penetration attain at once, upon turning their attention to them; so that they can talk and preach about them without detection amongst the multitude, while they themselves are workers of iniquity, blind, and dead in their sins. But this knowledge is speculative, worthless, resting in the head, and never changing the heart. And so must all knowledge of divine things be, unless the influence of the Spirit of God give it power to command and sway the soul. Because, by whatever method we attain the knowledge of any thing contrary to the bent of our own wicked hearts, we need much more than the most convincing *external* evidence, to make that knowledge efficacious to determine our will against its own strong and corrupt propensity. If you demand a proof of this, consider the remarkable case of the Jews at mount Horeb. Could any one of them doubt that the authority, which avouched the law given to them, was decisive? Nevertheless, how daringly did

they rush into idolatry! They did it not only against the express letter of the law, but while the terrible voice, in which it was delivered, one would think, was still sounding in their ears. And though they could not doubt the authority of God, yet their rebellions are imputed to their infidelity. *How long,* saith the Lord God, *will this people provoke me? how long will it be ere they believe me?* Numb. xiv. 14. The very same is the case with ourselves. We turn aside from the known commandments of our God; we prefer the service of some vile lust to our bounden duty, though we allow the Scripture to be a divine revelation, and read it as such, till we read it with prayer, imploring the God whose word it is, to grant, by the illumination of his Spirit, that his word may be put into our mind, and exert a sovereign sway over it.

This doctrine is of the utmost importance: for, if you take away the influences of the Holy Spirit from the members of the Church, the very Gospel of Christ will be no more than a sublime speculation, as ineffectual to change the heart or reform the world, as the pagan philosophy. The influence of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is the inestimable promise made to the Church; if therefore we would read the Bible for our reproof, our correction, our instruction in righteousness, we must before, and as we read, pray to God for his influence and teaching.

2. A second rule, no less worthy of our constant and careful observation is, *to read but a small portion at one time.* It is common for those who have the character of being very devout, to set themselves a certain quantity, suppose two or three chapters, to read every day; a much larger portion this than they can sufficiently attend to, except it be in some of the his-

torical parts of the Bible. Hence, though they converse much in this manner with the word of God, they remain as ignorant of its contents, at least as much unrenewed in their minds, as those who never look into it.* We must by no means therefore content ourselves with having the words and expressions of God before our eyes, or in our mouths. On the contrary, we must pause and deliberate much on the things signified by the words; we must labour to fix the true import of the divine expressions deep in our minds; so that the very spirit of the Bible may be, as it were, transcribed into them.

It is indeed true, that by the method here recommended, we shall read but a little, and our progress in going through all the principal parts of the sacred volume will be slow, compared with those who can read many chapters in a day. But then the singular benefit of such a method will amply reward our pains, and prove its superiority; for while in much recollection and silent meditation we take the word of God into our hands, and place ourselves as it were before him for instruction, we shall find the meaning of it

* By this miserable manner of reading Scripture, it is too frequently made for ever contemptible in the judgment of their children, through the superstition of some female devotees; who, notwithstanding their indulgence in every vanity of the world, yet will have their daughters read the Lessons and Psalms for the day, at least for the morning service; accordingly they hurry them over as fast as possible, while the expectation of the amusement immediately in succession, and the thoughts of dress, make the lessons an irksome task indeed.

It is therefore earnestly recommended to parents to beware of abusing a method of family devotion, which may be made of great service: and when they call upon their children to read God's word, to guard against a formal, lifeless reading of it.

beautifully unfolding; and the knowledge of what we gain in this manner will come with a transforming efficacy. It will also remain with us, and be our own, for use and recollection at all times; while the comment and explanations of other men, and our own hasty readings, however they may seem to instruct us, are soon forgotten, because they have no root in us. Notwithstanding therefore we may be strongly opposed in this method of reading the word of God by our sloth and natural aversion deeply to attend to spiritual things, we must do violence to ourselves; a little perseverance will master all the difficulty, and a little perseverance will enable each of us to say, *The law of the Lord is more precious to me than thousands of gold and silver; in that law do I exercise myself day and night.*

3. Nearly allied to this careful meditation on the word of God is another important rule, which we must observe when we read any principal part of it: that is, *to exact of ourselves correspondent affections,* and if we do not experience them, to lament and bewail the poverty and misery of our condition. For instance, when the character of *God* is before us; when we are reading such passages as describe him infinite in power, glorious in holiness, continually adored by the host of heaven, yet more tender and affectionate than a parent to the faithful in Christ Jesus, and interesting himself in all the most minute circumstances that can affect the welfare of those that love him: to read such descriptions of God will be to very little purpose, unless we pause and ask ourselves, Whether we in this manner really behold the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God; whether we have such views of him who is thus represented, as to make him

indeed our delight; as to satisfy us of his good and gracious intentions towards ourselves in particular, and to lead us with comfort to rely on him for all we want? In like manner, when we read the Scripture representations of the glory, the offices, and the sufferings of the *Redeemer,* with the inestimable promises he makes to them who trust in his name, little will it profit us unless we also at the same time search and try our souls, whether these representations make us eager to embrace a Saviour thus altogether lovely—unfeignedly thankful to God for this unspeakable gift —and able, without doubt or wavering, to yield ourselves up to his service, and to trust him as the guardian of our eternal interests. Also, when we meet with Scripture assertions of the weakness, blindness, guilt, and depravity of *fallen man,* in vain shall we assent to them, because found in the book of God, if we do not trace each of these branches of natural corruption as they have discovered themselves in *our* behaviour, and behold some remains of them still *in ourselves.* When the self-denying tempers of the *faithful in Christ,* their deliverance from the dominion of worldly hopes and fears, their unfeigned love to God and man, and their real imitation of Jesus in the abhorrence of all evil, is the subject before us, in vain shall we read of these spiritual attainments, unless we examine in what degree the infinitely desirable transformation has taken place in our own hearts.

Unless we thus read all Scripture with self-application, we shall do just enough to flatter and deceive ourselves that we are something, when we are nothing; enough to make us imagine we have a great regard to Scripture, when in fact it has no weight at

all with us to form our judgment, or to determine us in the grand object of our pursuit.

It is our duty therefore not only to read the word of God with frequency, but like men in earnest, who know that every thing is to be determined by its declarations—like men who know that he only is blessed whom that word blesses; and he most assuredly cursed whom that word curses. It is our duty to labour and pray, that we may have the Scripture impressed on all our sentiments, breathing in all our desires, and realized in all our conduct; so that all may see, and we ourselves most delightfully prove, that the word of the Lord is pure, converting our souls.

4. Lastly, We must read those portions of Scripture most *frequently*, which relate to *subjects of the greatest moment*. For as, in the frame of our body, God has ordained some parts to be absolutely necessary to its life, others to its comfort and ease, and others again to its ornament; in the same manner is the Scripture composed. As our greatest regard therefore is to such parts of the body as are most vital, so our most frequent contemplation must be fixed on those parts of Scripture which most nearly concern the glory of God, our own eternal salvation, and the good of others. The Scriptures therefore which delineate the perfections of God, his jealous regard for his own honour, the necessity of living in willing subjection to his authority, the certain insupportable miseries of the unconverted and unbelieving, the earthly and the sensual, call for our frequent perusal; for in such a world as this, and with hearts disposed as ours are, in vain we attempt to observe the commands of God, if we are not immovably persuaded of these

truths, and constantly reminded of them. The Scriptures also, which describe the miseries of our fallen state, the evil bias that is upon our will, our utter impotence on this very account to recover ourselves, are in a very eminent degree deserving of our frequent meditation. Of the same important nature are all those passages in holy writ which declare what the Saviour is in his own personal excellency; what he has done and suffered on earth; what he is now doing in heaven for his church; which acquaint us with his gracious calls and his tender expostulations; which instruct us in the knowledge of our own indispensable need of him in his offices of prophet, priest, and king. No one can look into the Bible without perceiving with what peculiar emphasis these subjects are treated; how they project to our view, and are insisted upon and extolled as the glorious display of God's wisdom and love. A deep intimate acquaintance therefore with these things is a principal end for which Scripture was given, and therefore should be our object in perusing it.

What is said also of the influences and operations of the Spirit, must be closely attended to by us, that we may know whether we are lead by the Spirit, or are walking according to the influence of our corrupt nature. For the true knowledge and firm belief of the Spirit's influence, is the only mean of supporting a Christian practice and temper. What relates to his operations on the soul, must frequently be made the subject of our meditation; because in the apostolic writings they are always insisted on as the infallible evidences of our being alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Unless the nature of these opera-

tions as explained in Scripture, be well understood by us, we shall be in danger of imposing upon ourselves, or of being deceived by the virtues of the world, which only counterfeit Christianity as politeness does real humility and love; we shall rest in the outward action, without regard to the internal motive from which it ought to spring.

Other rules might be added for direction in reading the word of God, but these are sufficient for edification, exhortation, and comfort; sufficient to make all who conform to them wise in the knowledge of God, his Son, and Spirit, unto salvation. *

* See Prayer the *Nineteenth.*

SUNDAY XXXVIII. CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Sources of Christian Happiness.

IT is too general an opinion, that men cannot be so happy in the present world by submitting in all things to the rules of the Christian faith, as by allowing themselves more liberty than it permits: that if we are to be entirely subject to the law of God, we must give up every present gratification, and, like the superstitious recluses of the convent, pass our time in melancholy, or at least under very irksome restraints. A falsehood this, which is at once full of *impiety* and *mischief.* Full of *impiety;* for it represents a life of faith and obedience to God as irksome, and only to be

endured in view of some reward, or through fear of some evil in another world; when, in point of gratification, it has the promise of this world, as well as of that which is to come. The slander also is big with *mischief;* because if men imagine Christian obedience an uncomfortable service, their violent propensity to present pleasure, joined with their faint belief of eternal things, will certainly lead them to indulge in transitory voluptuousness, risking any loss they may sustain beyond the grave, since that is distant and invisible.

The system therefore of doctrinal and practical Christianity, contained in this volume, cannot more properly be concluded than with a *representation of several sources of happiness peculiar to the faithful in Christ Jesus;* and with some unanswerable proofs of the *reasonableness, certainty,* and *necessity* of those evangelical consolations. From whence the conclusion will be evident, that there are no PLEASURES upon earth worthy to be named with those enjoyed by the obedient children of God, though they are often pitied as miserable and melancholy persons on account of the strictness of their religion.

1. The first source then of happiness peculiar to the faithful in Christ Jesus, is *the excellent knowledge they have attained. God the Father* in all his adorable perfections, in the works he has made, and in the word he has caused to be written, in the redemption he has provided, and in the blessings he has promised: *God the Son* in his original glory and marvellous humiliation, in all the parts and most benevolent purposes of his mediation: *God the Holy Ghost* in all his influences,

gifts, and graces, with the realities of the invisible, eternal world, constitute the pleasing subjects of meditation to the true believer. Nominal Christians, it is true, hear of all these subjects, perhaps profess constantly to believe in them; but they can neither find time to take any exact survey of them, nor to ponder them in their hearts; therefore *seeing they see, and do not perceive, and hearing they hear, and do not understand.* The knowledge of the things of God, on the contrary, which real believers possess, is lively, penetrating, and of course delightful.

No one can question the pleasures of the understanding, since thousands toil for no other reward. In the eyes of all the votaries of science, the discovery of truth has the most bewitching charms, even though the truth only relate to something in this perishing world, and is without any power to produce the dispositions essential to peace of mind. Is such knowledge pleasant? How much more then, the discovery of truths, which, besides their novelty, possess grandeur capable of engaging the whole mind, and filling it with admiration! This grandeur is no sooner apprehended, than the truths of God necessarily become a source of delight. Before, they were either despised or suspected, or blindly assented to from the force of education; now they act like themselves—they inspire new resolutions, they kindle ardent desires, they excite abundant hope: in a word, by their spiritual knowledge believers are brought into a new and glorious world, where objects interesting beyond measure, and tending to their honour and exultation, surround them.

It is most worthy of observation, that the very same

language which is used to denote the joyful change of night into day, is chosen by the Holy Ghost to express the change made in the minds of believers by the knowledge with which they are instructed by God. Of them it is said, in contra-distinction to their condition by nature: *Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.* Ephes. v. 8. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

This pleasure, which true believers enjoy from their *first acquaintance* with divine truths, *increases* as they advance. There is a very sensible progress in divine, no less than in human science: first a faint or confused view of the truths of God, then a clear perception of their matchless excellence, and various usefulness; first a dependence upon them, mixed with hesitation and fear, afterwards a full assurance of understanding and hope, a comprehension of the breadth and length and height and depth of what before was very superficially known. Such a progress is inseparable from perseverance in the faith of Christ, and a diligent use of the word of God and of prayer, and it never fails to prove a spring of fresh and increasing delight.

Further: This knowledge proves in a peculiar manner pleasant to those who possess it, from the *solid benefits* which it constantly confers. For while all other subjects, which employ the minds of men, leave them after their highest attainments, painfully sensible how little there is in them to satisfy their wants, to subdue their passions, to guard against various evils, or to support them, much less to profit them, when they

leave the present scene—True Christians experience in *their* knowledge, contentment in every condition, a preservative from the force of unruly passions, a shield against the assaults of their worst enemies. By this they are inspired with a supernatural firmness of mind, by this cheered in the hour of distress, still sure to find its immense value most, when they depart out of this mortal life.

Knowledge thus supremely excellent, enriches the souls of *all* real believers in Christ Jesus. Even the poorest and meanest of the vulgar, who truly receives and faithfully serves the Lord Jesus, stands not one single degree more distant from the attainment of it than men of parts and education. For as it is God only who communicates this knowledge, so all who make application for it in prayer, are equally sure to attain it. And the pure delight with which it replenishes the mind, is at once thus positively asserted, and emphatically recommended: *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.* Prov. iii. 13, 14, 17, 18.

Who can give any real credit to this positive assertion of holy writ, or consider the nature and qualities of Christian knowledge, and not see that real Christians are the *happiest* people upon earth? Who can impartially weigh these things, and for a moment question who are the persons that *now* pass their time in the most pleasant and truly joyous manner; whe-

ther they are the libertines who scoff at divine truths, the formalists who know nothing of their power, or sincere believers who experimentally know the consolation and excellence of the Christian doctrine ?

2. But this knowledge of the truth is always connected with the *possession of the richest spiritual blessings ;* particularly *the peace of God.*

No sooner are believers brought to the knowledge of Christ, so as to depend upon his work and mediation, than they are assured by the promise and the oath of God, that there is no condemnation to them that are in him, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. To this truth, the prophets, the apostles, and the Redeemer, continually bear witness. In the same proportion therefore as they receive it, their conscience is justly quieted, and from a sharp accuser is turned into an encouraging friend. It now no longer upbraids them with their folly, but commends their wisdom in flying to the strong hold which God hath provided ; no longer haunts them with apprehensions of approaching punishment, but registers and attests their cordial acceptance of the Lord, who is mighty to save ; they have now *the answer of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.* In this supernatural fact they can perceive that the indictment, which was against them for their transgressions of the law, is taken out of the way, and *they have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.*

The infinite superiority of delight which such persons must feel on account of their gracious acceptance with God, no one can question, who considers what

different ideas from the rest of mankind true believers entertain both of the essential holiness of God, and of the demerit of their own sin. The only reason why the pardoning mercy of God is not universally coveted more than either wealth or honour, is because men are generally hardened through presumption in infidelity. But suppose that your guilt, which never before grievously afflicted you, were now placed before you in its true point of light; suppose wherever you went, whatever you were doing, this most awful thought forced itself upon you: "I have been an "enemy to God in practically denying his govern-"ment, and robbing him of his glory; I have abused "his goodness, wearied his patience, and provoked his "justice to shut me out of heaven and his favour; "what must I do to be saved?" Suppose in this distress your understanding were enlightened, and your heart brought to rely upon God manifest in the flesh on purpose to seek and save that which was lost through sin—can you conceive any joy equal to the change from your fears to a good hope? can you imagine a more pleasing alteration of circumstances, than to have *grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*, succeed the black clouds of vengeance which were threatening every moment to break over your head? In this case, though the blessing is purely spiritual, and therefore counted light as air by the multitude, who were never in fear for themselves, nor in pain for their guilt; yet to you it must certainly prove a source of delight, as much beyond any temporal mercy, as the salvation of the soul is more desired by them who know its worth,

than any fading good of this world, however useful or valuable in its place.

3. Another blessing accompanying the knowledge of Christ, is the privilege of *adoption into the family of God.* To give some just idea of the delight arising from this peculiar privilege of believers, it is necessary to explain the nature of adoption, as the practice of it anciently obtained. It was customary, especially in the Grecian and Roman states, for a man of wealth, in default of issue from his own body, to make choice of some person upon whom he put his name, requiring him to relinquish his own family, and dwell from that time in his, and proclaiming him publicly his heir. In this act there was an imitation of nature, and the afflictive failure of offspring from himself, was supplied by something as really compensating for his loss as possible. The person thus adopted, was by law entitled to the inheritance, upon the decease of his adopter; and, however before void of all claim to such a benefit, or of expectation of it, was invested with the same privileges as if he had been born heir to his benefactor. Suppose then this act of adoption taking place in favour of some desolate orphan, how conspicuous would be his exaltation! how delightful the change of his condition! how happy, in the judgment of the world, the object of such a prosperous providence!

But worse than that of the most destitute orphan is our natural state. Our great Redeemer teaches us that we are *wretched, and miserable, poor, and blind, and naked,* till our relation to him by a living faith enriches us with all spiritual blessings. Though the truth of

this representation should be disallowed by the world, yet all believers in Christ Jesus acknowledge it to be a faithful picture of their own case. In this condition it was, they heard, and understood, and believed that the most merciful God *sent his own Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons;* that thus, through faith in his name, they might become fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; *for to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.*

Have not those persons then, who attain to this heavenly gift, a source of delight above all others in the world? Have they not the utmost cause to cry out in joyful admiration, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! what an height of honour! what an acquisition of true riches! for sinners to be adopted by the Lord God Almighty into a relation with himself, which at once entitles them to all things. For *all things,* says God, speaking by his apostle to true believers, *are yours:* whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, that is, all means, ordinances, or ministers; *or the world,* all the creatures and things in it, as far as they can be of any real service; *or life,* as long as its continuance can redound to your good; *or death,* which will be your everlasting gain: in a word, "*things present, and things to come;*" that is, all temporal and eternal mercies, *are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

O how immensely large, how inexhaustibly rich is this inheritance, to which real believers in Christ Jesus are adopted! It is impossible therefore for them

to read with understanding the Scripture, to believe the promises of God made to all the living members of the church of Christ and purchased with his blood, knowing at the same time that they are of that number, and not rejoice.

This joy is *inspired* and *supported by the Spirit* of adoption. Through the fall of our first father we have been separated at a great distance from God, and our alienation from him is still more increased by the offences of which our consciences accuse us. Now, as it is most common that the aggressor can hardly ever believe the party he has injured fully forgives him, so, after our trespasses against God, we are naturally suspicious of his intentions concerning us. This distrust aggravates our misery, and prevents our receiving any consolation from God when we most need it. Hence men in their distress, instead of flying to him on the wings of affiance and love, as their Father, their God, and their strong salvation, approach him, compelled as it were by their extremity, with a very faltering tongue and a very timorous heart. Daily observation too strongly proves this to be the gloomy condition of the multitude with respect to God: for, did they trust in him as their father or their friend, they would not, as they do, sink and be dismayed under troubles, or be unwilling to think much about him; much less would they tremble and be afraid of him.

With real believers the case is far otherwise: they *have not received again the spirit of bondage to fear, but they have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father: the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God.* In other words, they look up to God with the sweet confidence

which children place in their affectionate parents: not overawed by his infinite majesty, not intimidated by the consciousness of their guilt, as if it should be visited and avenged upon them: not in darkness and doubt about the disposition of the Almighty towards them; but assured by his own word ratified by his Spirit, that he is their God, and that they are his people Even though they should feel doubts of his love towards them rising within their breasts, they still exercise the Spirit of adoption: for they lament with an holy shame their unbelief, they tell him all they want, they patiently wait in humility till he sees fit to help them.

Explore now all the boasted sources of human gratification. You cannot produce a delight arising from them which can stand in competition with a child-like affiance in God; with a heart free from any other care but how to please him as our best and all-sufficient friend. Whoever has been conscious of such a Spirit of adoption, will avow the complacency, the blessed satisfaction he felt from it. Now the more believers grow in grace, and in the love and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more they will enjoy of this Spirit, both in its strength and in its duration.

4. Inseparably joined with the knowledge and privileges already mentioned, there is another source of peculiar delight to real believers, namely, the *exercise of religious tempers* wrought in them by the Holy Ghost.

In their *Repentance,* (how discouraging an aspect soever repentance may wear in the eyes of the world) pleasure still mingles with their tears; because they are tears which flow from a just and sacred principle

within. They love to abase themselves before God, to give his holiness, justice, and majesty their due honour; they are happy while they feel deep contrition for their past ill conduct towards Him, who does not stand over them with a rod of iron, to execute vengeance on them as they deserve, but holds forth the sceptre of his grace, that they may approach him and live. There is an inconceivable delight felt when the believer, returning to God, can say, "Lo! I come "to thee; thou art the Lord whom I will serve: what "I so long, by the basest sacrilege, alienated from "thy blessed service, presence, and communion, I "now desire to bring back to thee. Take all the pow-"ers of my soul and body; possess and employ them "only in thy work and to thy glory." When believers in this manner disclaim their own base interests *unreservedly*, without intending to keep any thing from God; *absolutely*, without making any conditions of their own, accepting his with all thankfulness; *peremptorily*, without halting between two opinions, as if they were inclined to retract the surrender of themselves which they have made: there is much delight interwoven in these exercises of repentance towards God.

But still much more *in acts of faith* towards the Lord Jesus Christ; for in these, there is a lively acknowledgment and habitual consideration of the highest benefits, of the strongest motives to love and obedience, as well as the strongest ground of joy and triumph. What can you imagine more delightful than for men, who see themselves all sin and misery, to look unto Jesus, who says, *he will deliver the poor and needy when they cry unto him; and them that have no*

helper? Their own emptiness they feel, and know his fullness for their relief; they bow at his footstool ready to perish, and he receives them as the father the returning prodigal, to put upon them the best robe; they confess their desert of nothing but wrath, and he freely grants them pardon; they know that without his interposition they must have sunk into hell, but behold he has exalted them into children of God, and heirs of glory. What pleasing emotions must such views of themselves and of him excite in their minds!

With these permanent sources of peculiar delight, all real believers are in some measure acquainted. Hence they stand independent of the world for their best joys, and can be happy in spite of all disappointments from it.

Further: There are seasons in which God is pleased in a more extraordinary manner to grant them joy unspeakable and full of glory. And this he does commonly before they are called to any severe trial, or when they are preparing for more extensive usefulness; then in a remarkable degree God is their exceeding joy. There are also seasons of devotion, both public and secret,

> When their souls,
> Snatch'd by the Spirit's power from their cells
> Of fleshy thraldom, feel themselves up-borne
> On plumes of ecstasy, and boldly spring
> Up to the porch of heaven.

Let us sum up now what have been insisted on as the several sources of happiness peculiar to real Christians,

They only possess that excellent *knowledge* which brings with it the peace of God and the blessings of re-

demption: they only are the *children of God* by adoption and grace, and have the disposition of children towards him: they only are conscious of the *exercises of repentance and faith,* love and hope, and of every grace in which the renovation of the mind after the image of God consists: they only *experience pleasure in communion with God,* and sometimes feel a transport which is remembered with living thankfulness long after the delightful sensation which first excited it is worn of.

Let not the wise man then *glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches;* for neither learning, nor power, nor wealth are the sources of happiness ordained for men; *but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth God;* who though he hath his throne in heaven, doth indeed dwell with the faithful on earth, and in their behalf exerciseth especial loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness; *for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.* Jer. xi. 23, 24.

Judge no longer then after the flesh concerning the source of true happiness; for it is no more perceptible by sense than the excellencies of the mind, than learning or genius. And as you would justly meet with contempt from the world for your ignorance and stupidity, should you dare to say that there is no delight in studying the fine arts, nor in making discoveries in nature by philosophical penetration; because these things are not adapted to the taste, or within the comprehension of the vulgar; because they are neither showy nor palpable, like the pleasures of the sensualist: so you may equally betray your own

miserable ignorance in the sight of all the excellent of the earth, when you dare to deny the present delight enjoyed by those who believe to the saving of their souls.

Pray therefore for divine knowledge to correct your depraved apprehensions, and to remove your grossness and unbelief of heart. Then you will perceive that Christians are not more distinguished by purity of practice, than by their superior pleasures: then you will understand (contrary to the low thoughts entertained of the Christian's choice, contrary to the impious prejudices abounding every where against it,) that among all the objects of sense never did the eye see any thing so grand and beautiful, or the ear hear any thing so delightful and advantageous; amongst all the branches of science, never did the thoughts of man comprehend any thing so completely adapted to bless the whole soul, *as the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, even before the sons of men;* which things are given to them on this side the grave, as a pledge of what they shall possess in the perfection of glory to all eternity.*

* See Prayer the *Nineteenth*.

SUNDAY XXXIX. CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Reasonableness of expecting Christian Joy.

THERE is nothing perhaps, at first view, more unaccountable than the strong prejudices which are entertained against the peculiar delights which spring from the knowledge of Christ. That the *doctrines* of the Gospel should offend, is no wonder; for the haughty spirit of man cannot brook the self-abasement they require. That its *precepts* should be complained of, it is easy to suppose, from the self-denial they enjoin. But that men, who call themselves Christians, should quarrel even with the *joys* of their own religion; that they should contemn them as at variance with solid reason and sound judgment, is indeed a most surprising fact: since upon the bare report of such sources of joy, our natural desire of happiness, one would conclude, must strongly prompt us to wish them real; and frequent disappointments from the world must incline us to think it also reasonable, that there should be some friendly sanctuary appointed for man, in which true joy and peace might be found.

But upon closer inquiry we shall discover *the ground* of these violent prejudices against the joys of the Christian faith. If these joys were allowed to be real, then those who have no experience of them must by their own confession discover, that they themselves are destitute of true Christianity: they must be compelled to own how low the state of their own religion

is, which consists in assenting to Scripture truths without feeling their power; in a round of duties without spiritual life; in being honest, sober, and harmless, without any more delight in God than professed infidels experience. The character, peace, and security therefore of all nominal Christians are at stake, and they are concerned for their own sakes, to ridicule that joy as enthusiastic, to which they are themselves strangers. Add to this, that "the spirit that lusteth in us "to envy," cannot allow others to receive tokens of the favourable loving-kindness of God, of which we do not partake ourselves.

From these causes, enforced perhaps by a few instances of real delusion, we may fairly account for the general prejudice against one of the noblest privileges of a Christian, delight and joy in God.

In vindication therefore of this privilege, I shall prove, that it is *reasonable* to conclude that real Christians *may* experience from the sources of joy already mentioned, peculiar happiness, and that it is *certain they in fact do.*

1. First then, It is *most reasonable* to conclude, that real Christians may experience peculiar happiness, because the infinitely *glorious God* always proposes himself, in his own blessed word, to our conceptions under the character of *a Father to the faithful in Christ,* in a sense to which none besides themselves can lay claim. It would be endless to cite all the passages which assert this important distinction. The Redeemer, in the plainest manner possible, distinguishes all believers, to the end of time, from the rest of mankind: *For whosoever,* says he, *shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven,* that is, in believing reve-

rential regard to me, *the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.* And when he was going into heaven, he said unto the representatives of the whole body of believers, *I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.* The apostle makes the very same distinction, and exhorts those who were wavering, whether they should separate and come out from the world or not, to shun all conformity to the ungodly, from this very motive, that then God would receive them, and be *a Father unto them,* and they should be his sons and daughters. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

As the great God then stands in this relation of a Father peculiarly to the faithful, we may assuredly conclude from thence, notwithstanding the distance between him and us, that his affection towards these his children far surpasses the love of earthly parents towards their own offspring. But where is the parent worthy of that tender name, who does not manifest his delight in all his dutiful children—who does not make their state of subjection a pleasure to them by numerous tokens of parental love? Is it not reasonable then to conclude that the eternal Father may make as sensible a difference between believers and hypocrites, as we do between our duteous children, who deserve and want encouragement from us, and stubborn ones who must be kept under a frown?—that he should manifest himself to the one as he doth not to the other?—that, to use his own words, "his "secret should be with them that fear him, and that "he should shew them his covenant," while others remain in a state of distance from him?—while utter strangers to spiritual light, they are left to grovel in

the pleasures of sin and the things of time, which they are base enough to prefer to God, and to the riches of his grace? Certainly this is a most rational conclusion, especially when it is considered that believers are declared through the whole Bible to be the delight and the treasure of God.

Nor is this to be objected against, as implying on the one hand too great a humiliation in the God of glory, or making, on the other, men of too great importance with him. Because this Scripture account of the connexion between God and the faithful necessarily supposes such condescension and regard to be paid to them. He therefore who, upon either of these presumptions, is ready to deride the mention of the peculiar joy of believers, despiseth not man, but his adorable Creator, who expressly says of the faithful, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* 2 Cor. vi. 16.

2. Further; The reasonableness of supposing that believers may experience peculiar delight, will appear more evident, from considering in what manner a tender father behaves to his children, who from their relation to him are *exposed to the persecution of his foes.* Here all the fire of parental love blazes out: here it is the parent's highest gratification to caress his suffering children with all possible demonstrations of his love. If we then, to use our Lord's inference, being evil, know how in such cases to reward, by an overflowing of affection, our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father in some better manner give tokens of his delight in them, who are sufferers through zeal to his truth, and love to his name? But who can be a Christian, according to the Scripture

definition of that character, and not suffer for it, while the world lieth in wickedness? Who can abstain from all epidemical profaneness and carelessness, without meeting immediately with much to exercise his patience, to try his courage, and to prove his Christian fidelity? What young person especially, (and a very great part of the servants of God devote themselves to him in the days of their youth), what young person, I say, shall dare to be more religious than those about him, without feeling a persecution, which, though domestic and little observed, is very grievous to flesh and blood to bear? In such cases does not sound reason justify the Scripture assertion, and teach us to conclude, that God will afford some immediate counterbalance to what is inflicted upon these confessors for his name and truth?—that he will enlighten the eyes of their understanding to know what is the hope of their calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards them that believe, to save and defend them? Where is the enthusiasm of supposing, that in such cases this Scripture is fulfilled to the joy of every believer's heart. *O how great is thy goodness, O God, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of men: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.* Psalm xxxi. 19, 20. In this passage the Almighty is represented as giving his faithful people such a lively sense of his favourable presence with them, as shall keep them from growing

weary of his service, and from repenting of their boldness for his truth; for by the secret communication of his grace and comfort to them, they shall pass their time as in a pavilion or tent, a place made on purpose for delight, though the strife of opposing or reviling tongues be heard around them.

Which position then is most reasonable, and consonant to the Scripture character of God, to assert, that he does, or that he does *not* in this manner care for those that love him? And if it be allowed that he exercises all the favour promised to them in the Bible, it may be asked, Which is the absurd position, to affirm that they may, or to be peremptory that they do *not* enjoy, in the midst of their self-denied obedience, such delight as others know not of, and which is far better than all the joys of the world?

3. It is most reasonable also to conclude, that true Christians in Christ Jesus may experience very peculiar delight, because *they seek all their joy from God alone.* The acquisition of riches will not satisfy *them,* nor the enjoyment of health, honour, nor long life. "Lord," they cry, "who is like unto thee? Lift thou up the "light of thy countenance upon us; this will put "more joy into our hearts than the increase of corn "or wine." What then is there savouring of enthusiasm in supposing that God, who both deserves such supreme love and strictly requires it, should answer those, who thus give unto him the honour due unto his name, according to the desires of their hearts?—what more reasonable, than to conclude that all those who are so divinely changed, as to prefer infinitely the delight of communion with God to every thing earthly and sensual, should each of them have immediate

cause to say, "The word of our God is true; he hath "done unto me according to the declaration of his "grace, in which he caused me to put my trust!" *I love them,* saith the Lord, *that love me, and they that seek me early* (earnestly) *shall find me. Riches and honour are with me, yea durable riches and righteousness; that I may cause those who love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures.* Prov. viii. 17, 18, 21.

4. Again: It is highly reasonable to suppose that real Christians may enjoy peculiar happiness in this life, because shortly their eternal state will be so immeasurably different from that of the careless and ungodly. The latter, alas! hardened even unto death, then meet with a full reward for their deeds in the frown of an angry God, and in the feelings of a conscience that can know no rest. The former are no sooner absent from the body, than we are assured they shall be present with the Lord.

I would ask then, Is it not most reasonable to suppose that some kind of anticipation of this bliss is enjoyed, before the fullness of it is revealed to their transported souls!—that those blessed heirs of salvation, who are soon to inherit the promises, should have a delightful acquaintance with their meaning and appropriation before-hand, and some degree of joy in their God, the same in kind with what is reserved for them in heaven?—that those, whom the King of kings will confess before men and angels, and reward with everlasting honours, should in their own consciences rejoice in the hope of glory, and, as the Scripture affirms, should be sealed of God, and have the earnest

of the Spirit in their hearts? Is not this much more reasonable than the supposition, that those, who are very soon to be as widely distant from each other as heaven from hell, should be at present alike destitute of any sensible enjoyment of the divine favour?—that both should be left to go on till the day of death and final separation; the one no more than the other experiencing the comfort of God's Spirit, the light of his countenance, and the joy of his salvation? Certainly there can be no greater absurdity than to imagine this.

What has been offered may, we hope, suffice to prove, that it is not in the least degree enthusiastic to conclude that the faithful in Christ Jesus may have peculiar gratifications of their own; and it may convince us that the experience of these delights, too often exploded as delusive, will appear upon closer examination to be perfectly rational.

5. But it is not merely upon its reasonableness that we rest the belief of the Christian's enjoying superior delights: the *Scripture*, our only unerring guide, has taught us to expect it: it has been *foretold by the prophets*, and *promised by the Redeemer*. By the *prophets* it is foretold with as much clearness, and in as strong terms, as either the holiness of Christians, or the glory of their Redeemer. Thus in the eighty-ninth Psalm, ver. 15, 16, 17. the whole body of believers is in this manner characterized: *Blessed is the people who know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted; for thou art the glory of their strength, and in thy favour their horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is*

our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our King. In what stronger colours than these, could any person, whose life was one continued scene of enjoyment, be represented? For what strikes the eye as the principal feature in this painting, is the peculiar delight of believers in Christ; delight arising from their knowledge and clear understanding of the everlasting Gospel, called in this passage, the *joyful sound.*

Full of the same Spirit of inspiration, Isaiah describes the Christian church as *rejoicing before God according to the joy in harvest,* and *as men rejoice when they divide the spoil:* and the cause of their exultation is, that *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* Isai. ix. 6. In another part of his writings, Christian believers are represented under the image of persons brought by the Lord of hosts to a festivity, where pleasures are crowded to give entertainment to each of the senses: where every thing that can regale, gratify, and exhilarate, is poured forth in the greatest abundance.* In a third passage, they are spoken of as returning to *Sion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: as going out with joy, and led forth with peace.* Isa. xxxv. 10—lv. 12. Every one of these passages, with many more that might be produced, relates wholly to the joyful frame of mind, in which the church of Christ was to receive his Gospel. But what likeness does it bear to the persons for whom the picture was drawn, unless believers enjoy much spiritual

* Isaiah xxv. 6.

delight? Between mere nominal Christians, however, to whom their faith communicates no happiness, and the Christians thus represented by the prophets, there is no resemblance. Yet surely we cannot but observe, that so positive is the prophetic description that such shall be the enjoyment of Christ's faithful people, that the veracity of God stands engaged to make good the delightful prediction. Unless therefore, with the Sadducees, we deny the authority of the prophetic books, we must allow that Christians possess incomparable joys.

Further, What the prophets foretold with one voice, the *Redeemer* himself has confirmed by his own express declarations and promises. On account of the blessings, of which his Gospel, as soon as it is truly believed, puts a man in possession, and the joy with which it inspires and fills his soul, he says, *The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.* Matt. xiii. 44. We know how the news of an estate unexpectedly bequeathed to us elevates the heart; in the very same manner, Christ in this passage declares, that a clear view of the glory of the Gospel affects the believer. In another place he represents the immediate effect of believing in his name to be such an abundant satisfaction to the soul, as to extinguish its restless appetite for the things of the world, and to cause fresh supports and consolations to spring up to an overflowing fullness till all the believer's wants are entirely removed, and all his desires completely satisfied in the enjoyment of eternal life: *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him*

shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. John iv. 14. *He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake Jesus of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.* John vii. 38, 39. In what more express terms, by what more lively images could the possession of peace and joy by his true disciples be asserted? And this is not confined to the more eminent followers of the Lamb, but is the common privilege of every one who drinketh of the water which Christ giveth, of every one that believeth on his name. What the woman of Samaria thus heard in private at one time from the mouth of Jesus, and what the vast concourse of Jewish people at another, of the happiness of believing on his name, under the figure of a fountain, and rivers of living waters, he plainly and literally affirms to his apostles in his affectionate and parting conversation with them. *He that hath my commandments,* who understands, receives, and embraces them all, *and keepeth them,* not only extols, but will not violate them, to whatever loss or suffering they may expose him; *He it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him:* he shall not only be the object of my delight and of my affections, but live under the sensible manifestations of my glory, faithfulness, and grace. One of his disciples, clearly understanding the Redeemer to mean some inestimable favour which was to be enjoyed by them, and not by the world, asks him, *How is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If*

any man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him; not leaving him, as one friend does another, after a transient visit, sorrowing the more for his absence, but as a fixt inhabitant, whose presence shall be experienced in light and strength, comfort and joy. Lest this evidence should not be sufficient to overcome the unbelief of the human heart, with respect to the enjoyment of such spiritual delight in the service of Christ, he says again, *Peace I leave with you, my peace,* such as I myself enjoy, as well as bestow, *I give unto you.* And lest it should be thought his followers in distant ages of the world, were not so much interested in these promises as his immediate disciples, he comprehends the apostles and all that should ever believe in him through their word, in one and the same all-prevailing prayer, which concludes with these words, equally applicable to his whole church, which shall be saved, *that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.* John xvii. 26.

* See Prayer the *Twentieth*.

SUNDAY XL. CHAPTER XL.

The Certainty and Necessity of Christian Joy.

IT is of so much importance to give a just impression of the happiness of the service of our Redeemer, that we have been very full in explaining the

sources from which it arises, and the *reasonableness* of expecting it: but however reasonable it may be that Christians should expect it, still it will be inquired, whether, *in point of fact, they do enjoy it?* This inquiry I shall now answer.

And here let me first refer you to the *example of the primitive Christians.* Immediately after that great conversion on the day of Pentecost, their behaviour is described in several particulars; and their state of mind, which indeed shewed itself in their actions, is sufficiently signified by two words, *gladness* or *exultation,* and *singleness* of heart. In the same book of the *Acts,* after Philip's preaching in the city of Samaria is mentioned, it is remarked, *there was great joy in that city.* When the *jailor* who had St. Paul in custody, had heard him once speak the word of the Lord; besides his actions, which plainly implied great alacrity of heart, it is expressly added in the close, *that he rejoiced.* The same account is given of the Ethiopian eunuch. As soon as Philip had preached Jesus unto him, he was baptized; and though his heavenly appointed guide was snatched from him, yet the doctrine taking place in his heart, *he went on his way,* it is not said reasoning, or deeply meditating only, but *rejoicing.* Indeed we have reason to think that all who heard the Gospel to any good purpose, heard it with the same sentiments of joy. They behaved at first like persons quite amazed and surprised with the grace of God. Before habit or improvement could have had time as yet to manifest themselves, they were raised by the pure joy of the Gospel above this world, and ready in its defence to embrace the martyr's stake. Now if, when the Gospel was first published, the ge-

nuine effect of it in every place was gladness of heart, you must either affirm that the Christians who lived at the first promulgation of the Gospel, were of a quite different species from those who now sincerely profess the same faith, or you must grant it to be a certain fact, that *all* real Christians *rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation.*

To evade this conclusion, it has been urged, that the persecutions which took place in the *first* ages of Christianity called for such manifestations of God's love; but that *now* they are no longer needed, and therefore not to be expected. As this assertion is become very general, and its influence extremely pernicious, it shall receive a full refutation.

Adopt then this false notion, and Scripture itself must lose its chief value. For we may say with as much reason of the whole, as of those passages which have been urged above, that they were delivered to particular persons on particular occasions. Wherefore, if Scripture belong to those to whom it was first addressed, in a sense in which it belongs not to the church in every age, then the Bible, instead of being a system of eternal truth, and an invariable rule of life, equally obligatory on all Christians, will dwindle into an antiquated, obsolete book. It will absolutely require that a distinction be made between the Scripture designed for the comfort and joy of the first believers in Christ, and that which those who live in after ages may claim: just as some papists divide the practical part of the New Testament into absolute commands, which belong to all, and counsels of perfection given only to a few.

Besides this notion is contrary to Scripture. St.

John declares the end for which he laboured to establish Christianity, was not merely the belief of the miracles, death, and resurrection of Christ, but *that ye,* saith he, *might have fellowship with us,* i. e. an equal share in all the high privileges, holy influences, and divine consolations which belong to that one body the church, of which Christ himself, full of power and glory, is the head. But we flatly contradict the apostle, when we affirm that there is a difference in point of spiritual privileges between even the chosen twelve, and those who have obtained like precious faith with them to the end of time.

But the *absurdity* of this popular notion is no less gross than its contradiction to Scripture. For, have not all Christians one faith? The truth that saves them, is it not invariably the same? Have they not one Spirit to teach this truth to the mind, and make it effectual? Is not the practice of duty in the same extent required?—the same sacrifice of worldly interests?—the cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye? And is not one heaven the everlasting habitation of all true Christians? As there is a perfect equality then in all these most interesting points, what reason can there be to suppose that there should arise such a vast disproportion in the matter of present joy and delight, from the influence of the same truth, the same hope, and the same Spirit? Especially, since the word of God informs us, that all who are ever disposed to embrace the heavenly Physician must first feel the sickness of their souls, and their danger of eternal death; that all who will be saved, must be first weary and heavy-laden with the burden of their guilt. This conviction annihilates as it were all

the distance of time, and all difference of external circumstances between the cotemporaries with Christ and his apostles, and succeeding believers to the end of the world: because *without* this conviction of sin, though Paul were preaching, or Jesus himself working miracles before our eyes, his salvation must be rejected; and *with* it, the record God has given of his Son becomes precious; and he is altogether lovely and full of glory.

But besides the united testimony of prophets, apostles, and the Saviour himself, in proof that real believers in his name do actually enjoy peculiar delight in his service, there is *the evidence of daily fact.* For how can we otherwise account for the total alteration both of choice and conduct in some persons of all ranks, and of all ages, and of all tempers, as soon as they really behold the glory of the Gospel? All these are *unanimous* in avowing they never knew what true happiness meant before they believed. Whatever they found formerly from the pleasures of sin, they confess to be now rendered despicable by their spiritual joy. Hence, long after the terrors of the Lord have ceased to work upon their fears, they keep at a distance from sin and vanity, from persons, things, and amusements on which they once doated, in order to enjoy more of what now makes them happy. Nor can this be owing to notions put into their heads, or to the force of imagination exciting fantastic joy; because great numbers have had no idea that there was any such thing as delight in God, till it sprung up in their own hearts, at once the object of their surprise, and the cause of their preference of the service of the Lord to all other things. Add to this, that many, who

notwithstanding their meek and prudent carriage, are obnoxious to their relations for their godliness, and treated with hardship on that account, are still far from desiring to make their peace at the expence of becoming gay, foolish, and careless, as they once were. They can find such composure, peace, and consolation in private prayer, reading, and meditation, as even under these disadvantageous circumstances prove better to them than all their former idle mirth and vain laughter, with the friendship and good countenance of the family to reward it.

If it be asked, Who knows such instances? I answer, The history of the church attests that there have been such in all ages. The most serious and godly part of the Christian world at this very day, young as well as old, are all vouchers of this truth, while on account of the better pleasure they now experience, and not from any cynical humour, they have lost their taste for the trash and folly, in which they themselves had once joy as much as others. Unless therefore we will shut our ears against the plain voice of Scripture, and our eyes against what is daily to be seen, we must confess that the persons who enjoy the highest and purest pleasures upon earth, are those who receive and obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now as believers do in fact enjoy such delight, so *it is necessary*, that *they should*. Were men indeed born with a different constitution, or placed in a situation more favourable to obedience, it might be sufficient plainly to mark out the line of duty, and to enforce the observance of it with rewards, too great to be brought into comparison with any pleasure or gain arising from transgression. But when we consider our

nature, what is so visible as that we are all greedy of *present* gratifications ?—and that our inclinations from our very birth impetuously hurry us on to take pleasure in things which are forbidden of God ? Look upon the youth of each sex, how continually are they prompted from within, how powerfully solicited from without, to forsake the path of duty from the very first moment they enter on the stage of the world ! how fatally inclined to prefer every entertainment of folly and sin to the most beneficial employment of their time : and to hear with strong disgust of God's authority interfering with their favourite pleasures ! The female sex, though in youth more restrained from gross vice, place their delight in indulging vanity, in obtaining distinction for elegance of form, gaudy attire, or a splendid appearance ; pleased to walk with "stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes," * fond above measure of levity and dissipation, and of course equally averse to the rule of duty. In the next stage of life, though the objects of gratification somewhat vary, still the inordinate affection towards them is as vehement as ever ; still ambition, luxury, or the pride of life are cherished and indulged as the chief means of happiness.

Such is our constitution. Now from hence arises the necessity of some *present* delight to reconcile us to an uniform obedience. Without this, in vain do teachers recommend on account of its future reward, the practice of godliness in preference to sensual gratifications and earthly pursuits. Alas ! this reward is only to be received through the hands of death, which

* Isai. iii. 16.

all men naturally choose to put at a distance from them. Make now, on the contrary, the proposal with which the Redeemer invites us into his service; prove *there is no man that hath left houses, or brethren, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his sake, and the Gospel's, but,* in a spiritual sense, through the consolations of God with him, and the favour of his peculiar providence, *he shall receive an hundred-fold* NOW IN THIS TIME, *houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecution, and in the world to come eternal life.* Mark x. 29, 30. Here you see an immediate equivalent for any sacrifice which is made in obedience and love to Christ. This renders a denial of our corrupt affections not only feasible, but upon the whole grateful; here is not, as must otherwise be the case, mere authority to overawe us, into obedience, but such spiritual delight as makes us entirely approve of our choice, and freely confess to the glory of God that we were utterly blind for not embracing it before.

And as it is necessary that believers should enjoy peculiar spiritual delight in order to engage them in the service of Christ, so it is much more necessary to *enable them to discharge some of the duties* required at their hands. For to them is the command addressed, *in every thing give thanks; rejoice in the Lord evermore; be content with such things as ye have; be patient in tribulation.* All these dispositions of mind are but a just acknowledgment of the mercies of redemption, and a proper gratitude *for the abundance of the gift of grace and justification unto eternal life.* But these tempers cannot have their residence, where the

soul is not elevated by the power of a divine faith, and habituated to such views of the great salvation of God as excite to thanksgiving: such views as reduce sufferings, which to the eye of sense and reason are most formidable, into light afflictions; and self-denials, which are to nature the most grievous, into welcome tests of the believer's sincerity towards God.—— Take away all such views; suppose nothing delightful apprehended in the love of Christ towards sinners, and it is impossible to have joy in God in time of trouble, and under every cross befalling us to give thanks. But if we be indeed risen with Christ, if our life be hid with Christ in God, if we have this hope that when he who is our life shall appear, we shall appear also with him in glory, then victory over our natural fears, and contentment in our most trying circumstances are practicable. And it would be easy to prove from the New Testament, that joy and thankfulness in every situation are required from us upon this supposition. It follows therefore, that without delight in God we must really dishonour him, by having our hearts engaged in pursuits unspeakably injurious to him and to ourselves: of consequence it is a certain truth that the very condition of our nature, compared with the obedience required to be paid by Christians, makes it needful that they should have sources of delight peculiar to themselves, and superior to every thing the world can offer.

These evidences in proof of the *reasonableness*, *certainty*, and *necessity* of the joy of believers are sufficient to satisfy all, I trust, who will submit to the authority of Scripture, and to deductions clearly drawn from it. I shall add therefore nothing more but a *cau-*

tion against the abuse of this doctrine, and an *exhortation* to all persons, as they love their own happiness, to seek in the first place, the enjoyment of the blessings of the Gospel.

It must be remembered then, that the delight of Christians is various in its degree, according to men's respective characters. The weak in faith enjoy but little in comparison of the strong. Reproaches, pains, and pressures, which are almost too heavy for the one, are borne by the other with alacrity. A brisk gale may affright the weak in faith, and make them dread a shipwreck; while the strong, by a more clear knowledge of God's word and will, and more experience of his ways, can trust without fear the care of their heavenly Pilot, though the tempest rage, and neither sun, nor moon, nor stars be visible for many days. Some are apt soon to yield to discouraging thoughts, if they be not speedily delivered from the perils and alarms attendant on the spiritual combat; while others, like veteran soldiers, can follow the Captain of their salvation, and endure hardships without being "wea-" ried and faint" in their minds. Some, who are but babes in Christ, ignorant of the discipline of their heavenly Father's house, find it difficult to believe that they are his children, when they feel the strength of their corruptions, or lose the sensible delights of communion with him: while others, who understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, no longer estimate their safety, or the favour of God towards them, *solely* by their own present sense and feeling. Some of very tender consciences and vehement desires to be holy, are ready to despond upon the discovery of the in-

firmities and spots which are found in all real Christians; while others of a sounder judgment only sink at the sight of them deeper into humility, cleave still more stedfastly to the Lord their hope, and so hold fast the confidence of their rejoicing.

In the *same* persons also *at different times* spiritual delight must be different, varying both according to their temptations, their faithfulness to God, their diligence in holy duties, and the good pleasure of Him from whose presence all consolation comes. While therefore it must be ever strenuously maintained as a noble privilege of real Christians, that they rejoice in the salvation of God, still the precise degree as well as the continuance of that joy, must not be absolutely fixed and made the test of all saving faith; for then we shall often make sad the hearts of the righteous, whom God would not have made sad, and beat down the weak, instead of strengthening and encouraging them.

Nevertheless, if persons making a profession of religion be habitually strangers to the delight so much spoken of throughout the Bible, they have great reason to suspect the soundness of their faith; abundant cause there is indeed for a thorough examination whether there be not some worldliness of temper, or some idol, as money or forbidden pleasure, which robs God of the supreme love he requires, or whether they have not mean thoughts of Christ's grace and power, but high ones of their own obedience. This scrutiny is necessary, and ought to be repeated, where no spiritual delight is experienced, because certainly the proper and abiding state of believers is that of delight in

God; his kingdom within them is a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and *joy in the Holy Ghost.*

Since then the present advantages of true faith are so great, who can have the lowest feelings of humanity, and not breathe out to God the apostle's ardent prayer, O that all, who hear the sound of the Gospel this day, were not almost, but altogether Christians! O that the tongues of men and angels were employed, and the arm of the Lord revealed, to compel our fellow-sinners to come in, that his house might be filled.

Ye young and gay, ye rich and noble, be no longer prejudiced against the Gospel of Christ, as if it were too strict a rule of duty for you to walk by consistently with happiness. Examine it more closely, and make a fair trial of submission to it; you will then find it an embassy of peace and reconciliation from the God of love to a world of rebels in arms against him; an assemblage of promises, privileges, and delights, suitable to all your wants, and adequate to your desires; designed to knit your hearts unto him that you may ever love his name; an assemblage of delights, which though not always the same, yet are superior at their lowest ebb to every thing the world can afford.

Cease also, *ye deluded sinners,* to indulge your impure and sensual appetites, your passion for wealth or honour, as if you must be miserable or melancholy if deprived of these base sources of gratification. Hearken and be persuaded!—The Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, makes a marriage-supper for his Son; that Son saith, respecting such as you, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear*

my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me; that is, we will dwell together on terms of the most intimate friendship and affection, and cheerfully feast together in token of reciprocal love. Consider this as you ought. I urge not upon you what must be your future doom, if you will not receive him that thus speaketh from heaven: I dwell not on that tremendous hour that will come, too soon, alas! when all your polluted sources of joy will be terribly transformed into your everlasting tormentors: I do not attempt to lay open the horrors of that *Tophet, which is deep and large, the pile whereof is fire and much wood, and which the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle.* But I beseech you by the consolations that are in Christ, by the comforts of love, by the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, call upon God that you may lay aside all wickedness and superfluity of naughtiness, that these inestimable blessings may immediately be your portion, and have place in your hearts. Deal not so madly any longer as to prefer the harlot's embrace, or cup of intemperance, to that fountain of joy which makes glad the whole church of God in heaven and earth; a state of pagan ignorance and estrangement from God, to the light of life shining in your souls; or the love of the world, and the things of the world, to the pledge and earnest of everlasting glory. Consider what a cloud of witnesses are ready to appear against you, to confront and confound you; they felt so much *immediate delight* in the Lord Jesus as to be glad to renounce every comfort of life for his sake, to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and to meet death in its most hideous form. The very

same Jesus, not more impaired in his excellency or love by length of days than the sun in its brightness, offers himself to you in the Gospel. And will you be such despicable dupes to your passions and to the errors of the world, as to be *afraid* of coming into full subjection to Christ, lest you should be sufferers in point of present happiness? Sufferers? impossible! for all you are required to give up is sordid vice, and the very prostitution of your souls to Satan! And be assured, that of all the gross falsehoods which he ever makes men credulous enough to believe, this is the greatest, to imagine any joy equal to that of knowing and loving Christ.

Finally, receive instruction, *ye decent self-justifying professors of religion.* Go no more about miserably to glean some grains of satisfaction from a good opinion of yourselves, nor labour to walk in the sparks of comfort which can be kindled from the works which you perform, and the principles from which they proceed. No longer tread the tiresome round of duties as a *penance* enjoined of God to escape damnation, and to gain his favour. Uncomfortable, senseless service! To such serious, but grievously mistaken souls, God thus speaks in his word: *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness; for I will give you the sure mercies of David,* that is, Christ. *Behold I have given him for a witness* (of my free grace and love) *to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* Make him the *Alpha* and *Omega,* the first and the last, the beginning

and the end of all your religion, and great will be your peace. You shall delight yourselves in the Lord, and he shall give you your hearts' desire: then shall you have cause to say, with all that are called to be one body in Christ, what Moses in triumph spoke of the church of God in old time: *What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?* *

* See Prayer the *Twentieth.*

☞ *The Fourteen Prayers succeeding the General Family Prayers are adapted to the principal Subjects of the preceding Treatise, and are intended to be used after the respective Chapters to which they are suited: they may be read in a regular Course as Family Prayers; and this will afford an agreeable and profitable Variety in Family Devotion.*

FORMS OF PRAYER

AND

OFFICES OF DEVOTION,

FOR

FAMILIES AND PRIVATE PERSONS,

UPON VARIOUS SUBJECTS AND OCCASIONS.

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FORMS OF PRAYER,

AND

OFFICES OF DEVOTION,

FOR FAMILIES AND PRIVATE PERSONS,

UPON VARIOUS SUBJECTS AND OCCASIONS.

GENERAL FAMILY PRAYERS.

The following ADMONITION, *read occasionally before Family Worship, is very proper to produce seriousness of mind, and to keep up a godly jealousy, lest hypocrisy and formality should render this important duty of no use.*

MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CHRISTIANS:

WE, dust and ashes, are assembled to speak unto the holy Lord God of heaven and earth, our Maker and our Judge, who deserves from us all possible reverence whenever we presume to call upon him. We are going to pray to that God who strictly charges us to take heed that we draw not nigh to him with our lips while our hearts are far from him—to that God who is of purer eyes than to regard our services with-

out the mediation of the holy One and the Just, who died for our sins, but has promised to give us whatever we shall ask of him in his name, and to perform all our petitions.

Now therefore let us lift up our hearts to him that he may fill us with reverence and godly fear, with sincerity and lowliness of mind, with lively faith in the blood and prevailing intercession of Jesus, and with assurance that we shall receive whatever we ask according to his will. With these holy dispositions we should desire always to bow down our knees before God.

I. *A Morning Prayer.* *

O Thou Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and God of glory, who hast so loved the world as to give thine only begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life, mercifully regard us miserable sinners. Thou seest how slow of heart we are to believe the record thou hast given of thy Son. Though we read of his glory, how little does it affect us! Though he has a name which is above every name in heaven or earth, how little affiance do we feel in him! or consolation from all that he hath done and suffered!

* Where the following Prayers are too long to be used without inconvenience, they may be shortened by leaving out some of the paragraphs into which they are divided, which may frequently be done without injury to the connexion.

Have compassion upon us, O Lord, and help us. Give us what thou hast most graciously promised, the Spirit of truth, to open our understanding, that we may understand the things which are spoken of thy Son in the Scriptures. O give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; of his person and his office; of his love and power towards all that hear his voice and follow him; that so we may abound in clear, sublime, and endearing thoughts of Christ Jesus the Lord: that he may be no less precious to us than he was to the glorious company of the apostles, and the noble army of martyrs. Thou, O God, hast declared that thy Son shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. Help us, we earnestly pray thee, to give him this honour day by day more perfectly. Enable us to comprehend with all saints the immeasurable extent of his love; the breadth and length, the height and depth thereof.

We beg this of thee, O our God, in order that we may have our affections raised up to heaven, where Christ sitteth on thy right hand: that we may grow more dead to the world, and walk more becoming our Christian character; that we may be enriched as much as possible with light and grace, joy and peace in this present life: and so shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into marvellous light.

We beseech thee that the excellency of our knowledge of Christ may be evidenced to others, by our adding day by day to our faith a noble Christian courage, in defence of his truth, honour, and government; by a constant victory over our corrupt affections; by a moderate use of all lawful comforts; by a

meek and quiet spirit under all our trials, and by resignation to the will of our heavenly Father.

Grant, O Lord, that our knowledge of the redemption that is in Jesus, may work effectually this day upon our hearts. Let the Saviour's love to us be the pattern of ours to all that are around us: let it make us zealous to embrace all opportunities of ministering to the happiness of one another. If we cannot assist the needy by our alms, or protect the oppressed by our power, O let us diligently exercise love, in abstaining from all uncharitableness of speech, from all frowardness and evil tempers: let us look upon the failings of others with pity, as if they were our own: make us kind and tender-hearted, forbearing and forgiving all, as thou, for Christ's sake, hast forgiven us. Banish from our dwelling all variance, whisperings, heart-burnings, and evil surmisings. Let peace and gentleness, meekness and goodness be exercised by all of us one towards another, and the only contention in our family be this, who shall conform most to the will of God, by abounding in brotherly kindness and fervent charity. Thou, O God, that makest men to be of one mind that dwell together, inspire us with a spirit of concord, and harmonize all our naturally selfish tempers. O let this benefit at least be found from our family devotion, that we agree better together, and live more in peace and quietness, than those who call not upon thee; who lie down and rise up like the herd of the stall, never saying, Where is God our Maker?

Continue, we beseech thee, if it seemeth good to thee, the voice of health and strength amongst us, and the favour of thy protecting providence; but give us

grace to expect, and be ready for, a change. And, as in a day, nay in an hour, our prosperity may be turned by thee into deep affliction, our health into pining sickness, our ease into tormenting pain, and our life into death, O Lord God, establish us in Christ Jesus, and give the earnest of thy Spirit in our hearts, that, whatever we are called to suffer, we may not be afraid with any amazement, but bear our cross cheerfully, to the edification of those around us.

Comfort and protect continually all our near relations and dear friends. Sanctify to them their present circumstances whatever they are. May they mind the things of the Spirit, and never be deluded by the things of time and sense. Be their guide through life, and at death give them admission into thy kingdom and glory.

Promote, O God, the peace and welfare of this our country. Let thy servant GEORGE, our most gracious King, be continually guided by thy counsel, and reign over us in righteousness. May he and his Ministers with unwearied labour seek to promote thy glory and his people's good.

Visit and relieve all who are distressed or oppressed: regard their tears, hear their sighs, give them to see their sin in their suffering, to humble themselves under thy hand, and find it is good for them to be afflicted. Bless our enemies; do good to them that hate us; and ever enable us to return good-will for evil.

Accept our praises for our continued preservation by thy goodness, who hast first brought us into being; for sleep upon our beds, for the return of the day after the shades of darkness, for the use of our reason, the comfort of this opportunity of worship-

ping thy name, and, above all, for the Light of life, the Sun of righteousness, Christ Jesus; for whom with all that is within us we would bless thy name; in whom we commend ourselves and our services to thee; and to whom, with thyself and the Holy Ghost, one God over all, be all honour and praise, love and obedience, for evermore.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

II. *An Evening Prayer.*

BLESSED and holy Lord God, who didst make all things by thy power, who rulest all things by thy providence, and fillest all places with thy presence, we thy unworthy creatures beseech thee to fill our hearts with an awful sense of thee, and with humility, sincerity, and faith in Christ, in our approaches to thee.

We thankfully acknowledge our absolute dependence upon thee: for our lives, and all the comforts of them, we are indebted to thy bounty. Thy hands fashioned us in the womb, brought us into this world, and ever since we saw the light, filled us with variety

of good.—We adore thy sparing mercy. Most justly mightest thou have brought upon us all the curses written in the book of thy law against our transgressions: and had thy ways been as our ways, and thy thoughts like our thoughts towards our enemies, we had long since been past the power of offering to thee our thanks and praise, beyond the benefit of prayer, or the hope of pardon.

We confess, O Lord, we have been transgressors of thy law in thought, word, and deed. We are chargeable with the workings and defilements of pride and hypocrisy, of uncharitableness and sensuality, of self-love and worldliness of heart, notwithstanding all the methods thou hast taken to heal these diseases of our souls. We have sinned against the clear revelation of thy will, and the strongest obligations binding us to comply with it. We have sinned against thy most inviting promises, and thy most dreadful threatenings; against the frequent warnings of thy word, the renewed motions and powerful convictions of thy Spirit, and the precious blood of Christ. We have sinned against the light of our understanding, against promises and purposes of obedience, and against the strongest remonstrances of our own consciences.

O God, we cannot recount the number of our sins, nor fully set in order all their aggravations. We should not therefore presume to ask for thy pardoning mercy, if we did not trust that thy Spirit has created within us a holy mourning, for all our wickedness, and for that corruption of our nature, from whence, as their fountain, all these poisonous streams have flowed. O humble us effectually, and place before us all the detestable qualities which meet together in

every act of sin; that injustice and contempt towards thee; that rebellion and ingratitude which prevail in it. And, oh! most merciful Father, speak peace to our souls, weary and heavy laden with guilt, through the death and sufferings of thy dear Son; and for the sake of his precious sacrifice, avert the punishment from us. Increase in us that faith whereby only we can be justified, and have peace with thee, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accompany thy pardoning mercy with thy purifying grace. Help us, O Father, thou God of all power and might, to put off the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man which is created after thine own image, in righteousness and true holiness. Give us a new heart, and create a right spirit within us. O grant us a mind weaned from the pomps and pleasures, the profits and honours, and all the transitory enjoyments of the flesh; but hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Prevent us by thy grace, that we may never more commit sin with the deceitful hope of gaining advantage by it. Impress us continually with the conviction, that the gaining of the whole world can be no recompence for the loss of the soul.

O let that solemn account we must ere long give, when the throne shall be set, the books be opened, and the dead, small and great, stand before God, influence the whole course of our lives: O let us so believe and so obey, that when Christ shall come in the clouds with power and great glory, we may then cry out with holy rapture, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us! This is the Lord, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!

To thy merciful protection, O God, we humbly commit ourselves, our dear friends, and relations this night. The darkness is no darkness with thee, but the night is as clear as the day. Defend, we beseech thee, our persons, our dwellings, and our possessions. Refresh us with sweet sleep; and with the health and strength of our bodies, and the vigour of our minds, let us serve thee all our days, till through the gate of death we enter into that blessed kingdom, where we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, through Jesus Christ; in dependence upon whose righteousness and intercession we further pray: Our Father, &c.

III. *A Prayer for the Lord's-Day Morning.*

THANKS be unto thee, O most merciful and gracious God, for having set apart this day to thy service. Never can we sufficiently express the obligations we owe thee for this stated season of rest from labour; for this delightful opportunity afforded us of imitating the heavenly host, while we assemble ourselves with one heart and voice to glorify thee, O God our heavenly Father; and thee, O Christ, our Advocate, Righteousness, and Life; and thee, O eternal Spirit, the Comforter and Sanctifier of the church of God.

We praise thee, who instead of loathing our persons

for our sinful pride and stubborn forgetfulness of thee, hast taken the most effectual methods to teach us the knowledge, and plant in us the love, of thy name. We praise thee that thou hast commanded us to make on this day public confession of our guilt, and of thy hatred of sin; of our disobedience and the riches of thy forbearance towards us; of our weakness, depravity, and need of thy perpetual grace to help us. We praise thee for commanding us to make public intercession for all sorts and conditions of men, in order that our hearts might be the more enlarged towards them, and our hands the more ready to minister to their necessities. We praise thee for this opportunity of hearing thy holy Scripture, which is profitable for our reproof, for our correction, for our instruction in righteousness.

We bless thee, that we have our habitation fixed in the land of liberty, under the bright beams of thy glorious Gospel: that we can worship thee according to our conscience, no one making us afraid: that we are not required to pay adoration to those who by nature are not gods, nor compelled to bow down at the altar of idols. We praise thee that we are in health and strength to use the sacred opportunity of going with the multitude that keep holy-day, into the house where thou hast recorded thy name, and promised to meet and bless us. How amiable are thy dwellings, O Lord of hosts! one day employed in them is better than a thousand engrossed by the business of the world.

We praise thee also for passing by all the provocations and insults which we have offered unto thee by abusing and profaning this holy day, by our detesta-

ble presumption in compassing thee about with deceit and lies. O how often have we rushed into the courts of thy house without meditation, without prayer, without any desire to worship thee with an holy worship! how often have we dissembled and pretended to give thee glory, when we were yet living in our sins, making thee angry with us every day, and casting thy law behind us!

O our God, let the time past suffice for us to have entered into thy courts thoughtless and unhumbled, self-satisfied and self-sufficient. Now teach us effectually to reverence thy sanctuary: make us feel awful conceptions of the God with whom we have to do, and of the infinite importance of the holy exercises in which we are going to engage. Thou knowest our souls cleave to the very dust of the ground. O send thy quickening Spirit to raise our thoughts and desires up to thee in every part of thy holy worship. Shield us on every side from the flesh, the world, and the devil, that they may have no power to fill us with sinful distractions, and make us absent in spirit while we are presenting our bodies in thy temple.

While we *confess* our guilt, open thou our understanding, we beseech thee, that we may understand all the aggravations of our wickedness. Call back to our remembrance whatever at any time has made us appear most vile in our own eyes, that we may now feel a godly sorrow, and be really ashamed and confounded at the sight of our iniquity. Accompany, we beseech thee, the *reading* of thy most holy *word* with the power of thy own Spirit, that so the practice of thy saints, and thy peculiar favour towards them, may

stir us up to be diligent followers of their examples: that we may receive the strong consolation from thy promises, which in Christ Jesus are all sure and infallibly certain, and, by hearing the Gospel proclaimed, attain to clearer views of thy great salvation. When we are offering up our *intercession* to thee, give us to feel tenderness of heart, melting pity towards all our fellow-creatures in distress, and very fervent desire that thou wouldest immediately appear for their relief. When we *ask* for mercy and forgiveness, strength and holiness of heart, may we ask with an earnestness suited to the value of these gifts, and with a strong conviction of our unavoidable misery if our suit be rejected.

When we join in giving *thanks* unto thy name, O make all thy goodness to pass before us. Excite in us such a lively remembrance of the multitude of thy mercies towards us, as shall fill our souls as it were with marrow and fatness, while our mouths are praising thee with joyful lips. From the beginning to the conclusion of the service of thy sanctuary, by the perpetual influence of thy free Spirit, do thou uphold us, that we may be satisfied with the pleasures of thy house, and offer to thee a pure offering in righteousness.

And as thou, O Lord, hast ordained that the people should seek thy law at the mouth of thy ministers, do thou fill them with knowledge and sound doctrine; that they may preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. Under their instructions, delivered according to thy will, may our ignorance be dispelled, our slothful hearts quickened, our fears removed, our hope encouraged, and our souls established in grace.

Finally, we beseech thee, O God, to incline our hearts to sanctify this whole day. Make it our delight to employ our time in reading thy word, in meditation and privacy, not yielding to the sinfulness of our hearts, or the custom of the world, in speaking our own words, in thinking our own thoughts, and finding our own pleasure on thy holy day. And grant us grace so to use this day of rest and of public worship in this life, that we may none of us fail of having a part in the everlasting adoration, praise, and love of thy name in the life to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IV. *A Prayer for the Lord's-Day Evening.*

O LORD, thou art great, wonderful, and holy. Thou art exalted far above all blessing and praise which can ever be offered to thee by the angels of light: yet such is thy condescending mercy, that the doors of thy house have been open this day to us, vile dust and miserable sinners. We have been waiting on thee in the ordinances of thy own appointment; and as we implored the comfort and help of thy Spirit, before we presented ourselves in thy courts, so now, as becometh us in bounden duty, we desire to return thee our most hearty thanks and praise, if we have found any deliverance from the hardness, unbelief, distraction, and deceitfulness of our depraved hearts, while we were offering our vows unto thee.

Not unto us, not unto us, but to the influence of thy Spirit be the praise, if we have *confessed* our sins this day with any self-loathing, and been melted into contrition for our offences; if the forbearance thou hast shewn towards us, and thy tender pity in sparing us, though so richly deserving damnation, have been sensible to our hearts, while we were accusing ourselves before thee.—We praise thee if we have sanctified this day, and our holy services in it, to the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, by looking only to the virtue of his atonement for the remission of our sins. We bless thee if we have found thy word sweet unto us, and the increasing discovery of thy love delightful to our hearts: if we have been filled with faith, and experienced in our hearts the Spirit of grace, of prayer and supplication; so that, instead of saying, When will the sabbath be gone, that we may buy and sell and get gain? we have found the spiritual provisions of thy house a feast indeed unto our souls. We thank thee if thy word preached hath searched us, making manifest any hidden corruption: if it has been for our edification, exhortation, and comfort in Christ Jesus. We thank thee, if it has been a pleasant and joyful thing to us to be thankful, to speak good of thy name, and to declare thy goodness towards the children of men.

Lord, increase and stir up within us evermore devout affections when we call upon thee: and in whatsoever we have displeased thee this day, O do thou pardon us. Overlook what has been wanting, forgive what has been amiss, though we are too blind ourselves to perceive it. There is iniquity in our most holy offerings. Purge away, we beseech thee, the de-

filement of them in the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Accept our devotions at the hands of our faithful and merciful High-priest, and may our sacrifices be perfumed with the sweet incense of his merits.

For his sake fulfil all the requests we have this day made known unto thee. O give us strength and power to live more according to thy will, in all righteousness and holiness. Let the benefit and success of our public worship be manifested in our whole deportment; and the influence of the good impressions made upon us in thy house, appear in our sincere love both to God and man, in our abhorring all that is evil, and cleaving to that which is good. Let every heavenly and Christian temper which we have this day requested, shine in our conversation, and our lives be a transcript of the graces we ask in our prayers. May we return again to our respective employments armed with the whole armour of God, and determined in nothing wilfully to offend thee. May thy praise and love, thy power and glory, and the mightiness of thy kingdom, be much in our thoughts, till at length we are brought to that everlasting sabbath where we shall no more need the use of these means; no more behold thee our God at a distance, and through ordinances darkly, but see thee face to face, and know thee even as we are known.

We desire now particularly to recommend to thy mercy all who are united to us by the ties of kindred or special friendship. Let none of them slightly esteem this holy day, or blindly think it enough to be merely present at the assemblies of thy people. May

they ever worship thee in spirit and truth, and esteem this day their delight.

We beg thy mercy upon all those nations which yet sit in darkness and the shadow of death, that the Sun of righteousness may arise upon them to guide their feet into the way of peace. O hasten the time, when all thou hast promised concerning thy church in the last days shall be accomplished; bring in the fullness of the Gentiles, and let all Israel be saved. Revive and cause to flourish in all places upon earth pure and undefiled religion. Let the power of godliness prevail, and daily obtain victory over the formality and hypocrisy of mere nominal Christians.

Particularly we recommend to thy protection and tenderest care, the kingdom in which we dwell. We entreat thee to direct, sanctify, and govern the heart of our Sovereign Lord the King. Prosper all his counsels for the good of his subjects. May he live dear to thee, beloved of his people, and receive at thy hands, after death, a crown of glory. Bless the Royal Family, and all that are in authority over us.

Take us this night, O our God, under thy protection. Watch over us while we sleep; if we wake in the night season, may our meditation of thee be sweet, and our souls be glad in the Lord. If we are spared to see the light of the returning day, may we rise from our beds to give all diligence to walk before thee to all well-pleasing. And whether we wake or sleep, live or die, may we be the Lord's. To him, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, everlasting praise, might, majesty, and dominion. Amen.

V. *A Prayer to be used when any Member of the Family is sick;*

Either entire as a Morning or Evening Prayer for the Family, or occasionally with some of the Family, or in part, paragraphs selected from it being added to the usual family devotions.

O THOU infinitely great and glorious God, thou killest and makest alive. Thou woundest, and thy hands make whole. Thou bringest down to the grave, and bringest back again. Thou dost according to thy will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay thine hand, or say unto thee, What dost thou? yet righteous art thou in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works. Even when thou afflictest, and causest trouble and heaviness to fall upon us, it is that we may learn righteousness from thy judgments, and receive profit from thy correction.

Wherefore, though thou hast now visited our house with sickness, and art calling us to humiliation for our sins, yet we would still speak good of thy name, and love and bless thee. We desire at this season to remember all the past mercies with which thou hast been pleased to bless us and our household. God forbid that our present grief should make us unmindful of the constant benefits we have enjoyed. How long has each of our family laid down and risen up, gone out and come in, in health, strength, and peace! How long has the candle of the Lord shone upon us without intermission! For these multiplied favours, blessed, O Lord, be thy good and holy name; since

the smallest of benefits is more than we deserve, and the sharpest affliction less.

To us, on account of our transgressions, is most justly due indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Wherefore then should living men complain, men and transgressors, for the punishment of their sins? Shall we receive so much good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? patiently and contentedly receive evil also? This temper we know, O Lord, is our bounden duty; O form it in us. And as in great compassion to us, thou hast opened a way of relief for us under every trouble, by directing, commanding, and encouraging us in all our afflictions, to pour out our complaints unto thee, and tell thee of all we fear and feel; to thee, O Father of mercies, do we make our supplication at this time. O Lord, be not far from us.

In entire submission to thy most wise and holy will, do we now earnestly pray for that person whose sickness fills us with so much concern. O look upon him (*or her*) in his low estate; suffer not, we beseech thee, his disorder to proceed, and let not this sickness be unto death, but be for the manifestation of thy grace towards us all. Thou knowest, Lord, his frame; lay no more upon him than thou wilt enable him to bear with patience and quietness of mind. And, O thou great Physician, without whom all others are of no value, do thou direct to the most proper medicines, and bless the art of healing to his body, and our great comfort. In thy due time restore thy servant to health and strength again, that he may have a longer day of grace and salvation, prove more useful, and do more good in his generation.

In the mean time, however thou shalt think fit to dispose of him, O sanctify unto him this affliction; work in him deep humiliation for his sin; bless him with repentance unto life; enable him by faith to behold the Lamb of God, and to trust in the fountain opened in his blood for the remission of sins, that, being justified through faith, he may have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Make all his bed in his sickness, and let patience have its perfect work in his soul. Raise him up to praise thy name, to pay those vows he makes in trouble before the assembly of thy saints, and to walk in newness of life. But if thou dost not see fit to spare thy servant, whom we are now remembering before thee, O prepare every one of this family, according to our several relations, for the awful stroke. With respect to himself, if the time of his departure draweth nigh, O let his heart be comforted by thy promises in Christ, and taste that thou art gracious unto him. May his soul be safe and happy at the hour of death; and in the great day of the Lord Jesus Christ may he be found amongst those who died in him.

And help us all, who are now in health, to improve this loud and solemn call to prepare for our own sickness and decease. Let us not abuse our bodily strength to encourage ourselves in sinful security and impenitence. Grant that we may always be ready, by performing the will of our Lord, that whensoever he shall come, we may be found of him in peace and enter into his joy: that whenever our health is turned into sickness, our strength into weakness, and our ease into sharp pain, we may not be cast down or perplexed, but feel in our souls those supports and

consolations, which the world cannot give, nor death itself take away.

Hear us, O Lord our God, in these our humble requests; forgive us our sins; and accept our persons and our services through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

VI. *A Prayer with Thanksgiving on the Recovery of a sick Member.*

MOST gracious and holy, good and merciful God! we have heard, we have seen, we have experienced thy love. Blessed, for ever blessed be thy name, that instead of being known to us by the judgments our sins have deserved, thou art manifested to us as the God willing to forgive all our iniquities. Thou hast delivered our eyes from tears, and our hearts from anguish. Thy servant, whom thou hast lately afflicted, is now a monument of thy sparing mercy. Thou hast chastened and corrected him (*or her*), but thou hast not delivered him over unto death. Thou hast turned our mourning into joy, and our fears into songs of praise.

O may this thy servant have been spared in order to live hereafter to the glory of thy name. We beseech thee perfect all that concerns his recovery: and grant that this gracious interposition may properly affect both him and every one of us in this family. From henceforth may we all more entirely depend upon thee for the continuance and preservation of our

dearest earthly comforts: may we consider them as thy free gifts, O Lord, and know that thou alone makest every earthly blessing be to us what it is.

And give us grace so to use and enjoy all our temporal comforts, as those who know that the fashion of this world passeth away. Grant we may learn from this late affliction in our family, to live more like persons who are soon to be separated by death, and to give all diligence to grow rich towards God, that we may be better prepared for a breach in our family whenever it shall come. And whensoever, O God, thou shalt be pleased to call any of us away, though for a season our family may thus be separated, may we all be united again in heaven, and be for ever with the Lord and with one another.

That we may none of us fall short of so glorious an end, O give us a clear knowledge of the excellency of our God, and a firmer dependence upon the word of thy grace. Grant us a stronger love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a greater resemblance of him: that each of us in our particular station may be zealous for God, full of mercy and justice towards men, and possess every temper whereby God can be glorified in us.

Fill our minds with a more cheerful and lively sense of our obligations to thee, especially for this late additional mercy; write it, we beseech thee, on our hearts, so that no temptation from without, or corruption from within, may make us ever act as if we forgot it.

And now, O Lord, we again present both ourselves and family, all we have and all we are, a lively sacrifice unto thee for all our remaining days. Be with us

when we are passing through the valley of the shadow of death: may we then fear no evil, nor have cause to fear any. Guard us through the gloomy passage, and bring us safe to thine eternal kingdom and glory. We humbly ask all these blessings, though utterly unworthy ourselves of any notice, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Amen.

FAMILY PRAYERS

ON PARTICULAR SUBJECTS.

VII. *A Prayer for a due Knowledge of the Worth of the Soul.* *

GLORY be to Thee, thou Father of the spirits of all flesh, for creating man in thine own likeness; for breathing into him a soul capable of the knowledge of thy wondrous works, and thy infinite perfections.

Glory be to thee, for so plainly revealing the worth of our souls in thy sight: for giving thine only Son to redeem them, when lost by the fall of our first parents: for his opening a new and living way through his flesh, whereby our guilty souls can have access to thee with confidence; be acquitted, purified, and exalted to dwell eternally in thy blessed presence.

Glory be to thee, who didst promise, and hast sent down from heaven, thy Holy Spirit, to enlighten, guide, and sanctify the souls of those who come to thee by Christ Jesus.

We return thee, O God, our unfeigned thanks for thy repeated promises of glory, reserved in heaven for

* This Prayer may be properly used after Chapters I, II.

every soul which departeth this life in the true faith and fear of thy name. We desire also to adore thy tender mercies towards us, in laying hell as it were open before our eyes; that, fully apprized of that dreadful place of torment, the prison of lost souls, we may ever labour to escape it. We bless thee for all thy compassionate calls, warnings, and exhortations, both in thy word and providence, designed to lead us to regard above every thing the salvation of our souls.

And now, O gracious Father! crown, we humbly beseech thee, all this thy goodness, by making it, through thy grace, effectual to work in us a lively and perpetual concern for the salvation of our immortal souls.

Deliver us, O God! from that gross ignorance, stupidity, and contempt of spiritual blessings, in which we are naturally involved. O! rescue us from the prevailing power of things present and striking to our senses; from the abuse of bodily health and strength; from the enchantments of the pleasures of sin, or of any earthly comforts whatsoever: from anxious care concerning the body or things of this world; which all act in confederacy against us, both to prevent and to extinguish a due solicitude to save our souls alive. Keep us also, O God of all power and grace! from neglecting our souls through the infectious example of the multitude, or through fear of being had in derision for labouring fervently in the means of saving them. Wherever we are, whatever is our employ, still sound, O God! in our ears, that momentous question, *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Continually do

thou dispose our hearts to avoid every thing that would prove hurtful to our souls, to watch unto prayer for their preservation, and to obtain sure and certain proofs, that they shall be saved in the day of the Lord.

Finally, O God! we beseech thee to have compassion on the great multitude who set at nought their never-dying souls; who are secure and at ease, though on the point of being eternally lost: cause, O Lord! the scales to fall from their eyes; take away from them all their hardness of heart, contempt of thy word, and cruelty towards themselves; that they at last may inherit thy great salvation, prepared for the souls of the faithful in Christ Jesus. For his sake alone we beseech thee to hear us; and in him we trust, our Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

VIII. *A Prayer for the right Knowledge of God.*

O GOD! whom no man knoweth naturally, or can discover by his own understanding, command, we humbly beseech thee, the light of the knowledge of thy glory to shine into our hearts. May we conceive of thee, O ever-blessed God! as thou hast described thyself in thy word. Teach us to think of thee as the God who inhabiteth eternity; who hath made all things by the breath of his mouth, who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, who filleth all things by his presence, and hath created them

for his own glory. May we ever look up to thee as seated on the throne of the universe, killing and giving life, ordaining health and sickness, making rich and poor, as seemeth best in thy sight, doing whatsoever thou pleasest in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. Raise our grovelling ideas of thy glorious perfections, and help us daily to adore what is beyond the power of created minds to comprehend.

Teach us also, O blessed God! to understand, that as is thy majesty and might, so is thy *knowledge* and *wisdom;* that known unto thee, from the beginning, are all thy works, in all places of thy dominion; that our most secret purposes, desires, and thoughts, are more open to thy all-seeing eye, than even to the notice of our own minds. Enlarge our conceptions of thy wisdom, which ordains and governs all things for the brightest display of thine own excellency. And in the view of our inability to judge what it is fit for thee to command or to do; may we bow down before every revelation of thy will with the lowest reverence, and to every appointment of thy providence respecting us and our fellow-creatures with the readiest submission.

O Lord! open our eyes, and cause *thy goodness* to pass before us. May we behold thee pouring out the blessings of health and strength, of food and raiment, and exercising forbearance and long-suffering, even to the most evil and unthankful. Above all, we beseech thee to grant us the light of true faith, to behold thee in Christ reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing their trespasses, but freely offering life and righteousness to rebels and enemies against thee.

And lest our wicked hearts should abuse the riches of thy grace, root and ground us in the knowledge of thyself as a *righteous* and *jealous* God, and to sinners refusing Christ a consuming fire. Fill us with a perpetual consciousness of thy essential holiness, not to be approached but through the mediation of thy Son; not vouchsafing remission of sin without the shedding of blood, even the blood of him that is higher than the heavens.

Enlighten the eyes of our understanding, to perceive how *favourable and gracious* thou art to all that believe truly in thee. May we see that the care of their souls is ever with thee, O most gracious God, to water them with the dew of thy grace, and, lest any hurt them, to keep them by night and by day.

This knowledge and manifestation of thyself to us, O God! we earnestly beg, in order that we may never more forget thee, or slightly think or speak of thee, or wickedly imagine thee in our hearts such a one as ourselves. We want to understand and know thee aright, that we may glorify thee as God; that we may trust in thee without wavering, serve thee with all alacrity and perseverance, delight ourselves in thee, and never more wilfully offend thee.

O our God, for Christ's sake pardon our past forgetfulness and gross ignorance of thee. Pardon all our misrepresentations of thy nature and will, which we have been guilty of making both to ourselves and others. Punish us not as we have deserved, for being satisfied so long to hear of thee only by the hearing of the ear, without reverencing and fearing thee in our hearts. For Jesu's sake, who came to teach us

the way of worshipping thee in spirit and in truth, be merciful unto our unrighteousness. Give us repentance for all that is past; and incline our hearts to pray with all perseverance for the gift of thy Spirit, that he may reveal to us the things of God, and enable us with open face to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, so as to be changed into the same image from glory to glory. We ask this in entire dependence upon our merciful and faithful High-priest, Jesus thy Son, who came into the world to manifest thy name to them that believe on him. To him, with thyself, and the eternal Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

IX. *A Prayer with Confession of Sin and Humiliation.*

O THOU most holy God, who dost resist the proud, and givest grace to the humble; humble us, we beseech thee, in our own eyes. Subdue that haughty spirit within us, which turns with disdain from the sight of our natural corruption, and cannot brook the charge of sinfulness brought against us in thy word.

To this end, O God, do thou affect our consciences by the consideration of the time we have spent in ignorance and folly; not feeling our dependence upon thee; not affected with thy absolute authority over

us; neither discovering the excellence of obedience to thee, nor the baseness of rebelling against thee.

With shame would we acknowledge our forgetfulness of thee, so seldom inquiring, Where is God our Maker? With grief would we reflect how, when rebuked with sickness or pain, or forced by our dangers or deliverances, to advert to thy power and goodness, the remembrance of thee has vanished away even as a dream when one awaketh.—The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life, how have these engrossed us, so that thou, O God, wast not in all our thoughts! Or if through the force of education or pious examples we could not entirely banish the remembrance of thee, how often, alas! have we set at nought thy counsel! Instead of trembling at thy command, we have trampled it under our feet. When thou hast called, we have refused to answer. We have behaved to thee as if thy laws were unreasonable, and thy service contemptible. Our evil passions we have obeyed readily, but we would not regard thy counsel, nor be checked by thy reproof.

Lord, open our eyes, to see that all this our forgetfulness and contempt of thee, has proceeded from the enmity to thee which is natural to our fallen minds. Shew us how often our hearts have risen up within us against thee, not being able to bear that Thou shouldest be so highly exalted, and that we should be restrained from every sinful gratification. Convince us, that for this cause we have not liked to retain the knowledge of thee, but said unto thee in our hearts, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. In aversion to thee, alas! we have too of-

ten chosen the company of the ungodly, while we have held the most zealous of thy servants in derision, counting their lives foolishness, and their end to be without honour.

And now, O God! we cannot but own that we are exceedingly sinful in thy sight. Let us not palliate and dissemble our sin, but acknowledge it with sincere contrition. And while we bewail our corrupt state, teach us to cry out, in the most profound admiration of thy grace, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou regardest him?* From a deep conviction of our total depravity, enable us to perceive our absolute need of a Redeemer. May we see our sinfulness to be such, as could not be pardoned but through his atoning blood; and our vile affections so many and so strong, as could not be subdued but by his Spirit; and we ourselves in every part and faculty so totally fallen from God, as to be incapable of entering into his kingdom, except we be first created anew. Grant us wisdom, O Lord, from every discovery of our innate depravity, to set a higher value on the blood and righteousness of Christ, and to hunger and thirst more for the renewing influences of his Spirit. From a clear knowledge of what we are in ourselves, and from the conviction that in us, that is, in our corrupt nature, dwelleth no good thing, may we be jealous of ourselves and circumspect, and with all humility put our whole trust in thy promises, power, and grace, to keep us from falling.

Further, O Lord, we beseech thee to make the knowledge of our natural corruption work in us great tenderness of heart towards all mankind. May we pity nad pray for our fellow-creatures, and endeavour to

amend them—may we be led, by what we observe in others, to turn our eyes upon ourselves, and to discover more clearly our own defects, knowing that we are all of one blood, and heirs of the same corruption.

Finally, we commend to thee, O God, who alone canst shew to them that be in error the light of truth, all those who deny their natural blindness and corruption. Let not pride blind their eyes; set their sins before them in all their aggravations; convince them by thy Spirit that they have reason to abhor themselves: let them see thee as thou art, and perceive the spotless purity of thy law; that they may bow down before thee, wretched and miserable; that they may come poor, and blind, and naked, to partake of the salvation which thou hast provided in Christ Jesus for us, by nature sinners and enemies to thyself. For the sake and in the name of thy dear Son, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, we beseech thee to hear us. Amen.

X. *A Prayer for a right Knowledge of the Law.*

O GOD! infinitely glorious in holiness, jealous of the honour of thy great name, yet full of mercy to us miserable sinners; thou hast given us a law spiritual, pure, and holy: let us not, we beseech thee, live without a clear knowledge of its nature and its design. Enable us to see that it can give no righteousness to fallen man; and that it was ordained to

humble him, and to give him the knowledge of his sin and demerit.

Grant, therefore, O God! that we may utterly cease from every expectation of escaping thy wrath, through our personal obedience to the law. Let the time past suffice us to have been ignorant of its demands; to have trusted for righteousness to our prayers, our virtues, our duties and performances. Now we see ourselves cut off from every hope of mercy, on account of our own desert. O! make thy law effectually operate, to produce in us a true and abiding humiliation. By the strictness of its moral precepts, and the severity of its curses, may it prove to us a schoolmaster, teaching us most powerfully our need of such a Saviour as the Lord Jesus Christ. May an increasing knowledge of its extent sweep away every refuge of vanity and lies, to which we naturally flee as a cover for our guilt. May it make us build all our hope of acceptance with thee, only on that sure foundation laid in Sion; on that tried corner-stone, the crucified Jesus. As persons concluded under sin by thy law, O God! may we look with tears of joy, with thankfulness unutterable, with affiance unshaken, to *Him* who is God and man in one Christ, who hath redeemed all who flee to him for refuge from the curse of the law, and who gives them the victory over it, having been made himself a curse for them.

O! may this great, this only Fulfiller of the law, be always honoured and trusted in by us, *as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* To him may we be truly thankful and obedient with all gladness and readiness of mind. May we love him as the surety to us of a better covenant, established upon

better promises: may we rejoice and triumph always in Christ, that while the righteousness of the Law saith, *the man who doeth these things shall live by them,* we may embrace the righteousness of Faith, which saith, *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

And the nearer the all-decisive hour approaches, when we must stand before the awful bar of God, so much the more solicitous do thou make us to be found, *not under the Law, but under Grace; to be found in Christ,* not trusting in *our own righteousness, which is of the Law,* for justification, *but in the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*; that so in the presence of men and angels, and to the confusion of the enemies of our souls, it may be proclaimed in the last day of us, These are the believers in my word! *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*

We beseech thee, O God! to have compassion upon those *who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge: who being ignorant of thy righteousness, are going about to establish their own, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.* Give them to know they can never have peace or safety upon any foundation they can lay with their own hands; lead them to the *Rock that is higher than themselves,* and to Him who is called, with respect to his church, by this endearing title, *the Lord our righteousness.*

Finally, We beg that thou wouldest give repentance and conversion from the dreadful error of their ways, to all who are wresting the Law to their own destruction; who reject it as the rule of their life, and in the

madness of their folly and impiety, despise *that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* Teach them that *the Law is good, if a man use it lawfully;* and that whoever is *dead to the Law,* through *the body of Christ,* is *married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that* he *should bring forth fruit unto God.* Hear and answer us, O King of heaven! in all these our requests, for thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ the righteous, our advocate, and the propitiation for our sins. Amen.

XI. *A Prayer for true Faith.*

WE offer unto thee, O Lord our God, our unfeigned thanks for thy great goodness to us.—Instead of dooming us, apostate and rebellious creatures, to perdition, as our sins deserve, thou hast laid our help upon One mighty, and able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto thee by him. We bless thee for commanding us to place our whole affiance in him, to supply all our wants.

But, O Lord our God! thou knowest that naturally our hearts are full of pride and unbelief; unwilling to confess our ruined state, and to make application to Him, who alone can save us. Thou seest that we are prone to deceive ourselves: apt to be confident that we are believers in Jesus, while we are utterly void of true faith, while all our natural blindness and hardness of heart still remain.

But we beseech thee, O God of truth! to disperse, by the conviction and teaching of thy Spirit, all vain imaginations of our hearts, and to remove all pernicious errors. Whatever is wanting to make us not almost, but altogether believers in Christ Jesus, do thou discover to us, and work in us. Every false presumptuous hope do thou beat down, how long soever we have cherished it, how confidently soever we have built upon it.

If we have not come truly to Christ for life, give us grace, O God! without delay, to draw nigh to him as guilty and perishing sinners, and to depend upon his atoning death and meritorious righteousness as our introduction into thy favour, and safeguard from the wrath to come. And let a solid peace and a lively hope take place in our minds, instead of guilty fears or stupid insensibility; and through the blood of Christ our passover, may we have boldness to enter into the holiest, and in the spirit of adoption to cry unto thee, *Abba, Father.*

Give us grace to perceive our absolute need of instruction in righteousness, and to depend upon Christ to reveal to us by his Spirit, in the use of the means of grace, all things that pertain to our salvation. Sensible of the mists which our natural corruption and prejudices cast before our eyes, and of the dimness and obscurity with which we behold the glorious objects of our Faith, help us to draw nigh to him, that we may receive our sight, and be made wise unto salvation!

And as thou art acquainted, O Lord, with all our weakness, and the strength of our enemies, O! lead us to the Rock that is higher than ourselves. Let our

souls be stayed upon Him, who is the defence of those that trust in him. In his name and in his strength may we go forth, prepared cheerfully to do, or patiently to suffer whatsoever is thy will, concerning us. And, instead of yielding to perplexing doubts and vain fears, give us a heart to cleave with full and stedfast purpose to our Redeemer. And as an evidence that we do indeed trust in thy only begotten Son, and are accepted by thee in him, may we find that our souls are endued with strength to walk uprightly, to work righteousness, and in all things to adorn the Gospel of Christ.

We pray for the *Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him* more and more; and for such faith in his power, his love, and all-sufficient mediation, as may expel from our hearts that fear of death, from which Christ came to deliver those who believe. And finally, We beseech thee, O merciful and gracious God, when the trying and solemn hour of our dissolution shall be at hand, and we shall most need the consolations of Christ, may we then most firmly depend upon him.—May we *know in whom we have believed, and that he is able to keep that which* we have intrusted to him. We beg this in dependence upon him, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God. Amen.

XII. *A Prayer for Confidence in Christ.*

O LORD Jesu Christ! infinitely worthy art thou to be exalted and extolled, and to be very high in all our thoughts: infinitely worthy that all men should honour thee, even as they honour the Father. —We, humbly believing in thy name, come now into thy presence, entreating thee to display with a divine energy to us the whole of that character thou sustainest for the salvation of sinners.

We want, O Lord, a more heart-affecting knowledge of the benefits purchased for thy church by thy holy incarnation and nativity, by thy sinless life and meritorious death on the cross. Enlighten the eyes of our understanding to perceive, that as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, thou also thyself didst take part of the same, that as their representative and surety thou mightest fulfill all righteousness. By the power of a divine faith may we behold thee, by thy death on the cross, finishing transgression, making an end of sin, making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness! O! take away the veil of ignorance and unbelief, which would keep us from beholding in thy death the glory which belongs to it. Teach us to regard it as making our peace with God, and may it purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God. Against all the fiery darts of the wicked one, may this prove to us an impenetrable shield that Christ has died, yea, rather risen again: under the most distressing accusations of guilt, may Christ crucified be to us a hiding-place

from the wind, and a covert from the tempest of divine wrath! O! enlarge and exalt continually our ideas of the efficacy of thy atonement and righteousness; not that we may from thence take encouragement to sin (abhorred be the execrable thought), but that our hearts may be set at liberty from all chilling slavish fear, that we may run the way of thy commandments, knowing our labour not to be in vain in the Lord.

And we beseech thee, O Lord! to grant unto us grace to trust in thy might, for preservation from the force of all our inbred lusts, and outward temptations. May we know what is the exceeding greatness of thy power, which worketh mightily in all them that believe! Assure our hearts, against all suggestions to the contrary, that thou art both able and willing to subdue our iniquities, and to keep us unblamable and unreprovable in holiness before thee. Overcome our proud and self-sufficient spirit, that it may never lead us again to dishonour and provoke thee, by attempting to perform duty, resist temptation, or escape the snares of our enemies in our own strength. Convince us, O Lord! that when we are most weak in our own opinion of ourselves, if led by the sense of weakness to seek thy help, then are we most strong; and that while we depend on thy arm and thy favour towards us, no force or number of temptations, no corruption or weakness of our nature, no strength of the most confirmed habits, nor any attempts of Satan shall be able to prevail against us, to destroy or enslave our souls.

For the confirmation of our faith in thy name, impress upon our hearts, O Lord, the knowledge of thy

original glory. Give us to embrace with full assurance of understanding and joy unspeakable that great mystery of godliness, that though born a child, and given to us as a son in our nature, thou wert still God manifest in the flesh, the mighty God, *by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, and by whom all things consist.* In spite of all opposition from our own pride and ignorance, may we obey and bow down before this truth of thy infallible word. From hence may we at all times remember, that thou art indeed infinite in wisdom to teach, and in power to defend us; infinite in holiness to sanctify us, and in justice to avenge thy injured name; infinite in goodness to supply all our wants, and to complete our felicity; infinite in truth to accomplish all thy exceeding great and precious promises made to them that call upon thee, and altogether such a Saviour, as our deep and manifold necessities absolutely require. O! let us have in ourselves the witness of thy power and glory, from our increasing experience of a divine change wrought in our understanding and will; that so we may praise and magnify thy name all the days of our life on earth; and when we depart hence, may be prepared to join in the song of the ransomed of the Lord, and for ever to adore and bless thee, saying, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and honour, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.*

XIII. *A Prayer for the Influence of the Holy Spirit.*

O THOU infinite, almighty, eternal Spirit! by whose inspiration all Scripture was given; whose descent on the day of Pentecost, in token of thy presence with the church of Christ, was most visible and glorious! we desire to magnify thy name for all the mighty signs and wonders which the apostles and evangelists, in old time, were by thee enabled to perform. We thank thee for thy glorious works, through which the heathen became the heritage of the Lord, and the utmost parts of the earth his possession. We adore thee, O thou Holy Ghost! as the Spirit of truth, who alone canst lead us, blind, perverse, proud creatures, into the knowledge of the truth: as the Comforter, whose anointing alone can open our eyes to behold excellency and glory in those things of God, which the natural man receiveth not, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. We desire also to own how entirely we stand indebted to thy sacred influence on our minds, if we can now say with any affiance and real knowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. If he is now become precious to us, we would confess to thy honour, it is because thou hast testified of him, and glorified him before us: that if we now see the evil of attempting to come to the Father any other way than through the Son of his love, it is because thou, O Holy Ghost! hast taken of the things that are Christ's and shewn them un-

to us: that if we have been stripped of every plea to justification before God, which the pride of our hearts would set up; if we have been reduced to the necessity of seeking mercy and grace only for the Mediator's sake, it has been owing to thy grace, and to thy name be the praise. We know that *in us*, that is, in our flesh, *dwelleth no good thing;* to thy inspiration therefore we ascribe the glory of all the good we have been able to perform; of all the light and life we have received and enjoyed in our public or private acts of devotion; of all our edification from time to time by hearing thy word read and preached to us. For it is thou, O eternal Spirit! who hast helped our infirmities, and by thine own power and demonstration made the means of grace to be effectual to the improvement of our souls.

Grant, we beseech thee, that our experimental knowledge of thy blessings may create in us more vehement desires to be filled with *the fruit of the Spirit, which is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.* We desire more and more to experience thy divine influences, so as to *live in the Spirit,* and *walk in the Spirit.* To this end may we cherish as inestimably precious, all thy suggestions, covet more than any other thing thy aids, comforts, and illuminations, yield up ourselves entirely to thy teaching, and be led by thee into the land of righteousness.

And as we are not ignorant of the dangers into which our pride and the subtilty of Satan may betray us, we beg of thee to give us a sound mind and a right judgment in all things, that we may never cause thy influences to be blasphemed through our sinful

folly and enthusiasm. May we seek and expect thy aid in those ways, and by those means alone, which are of thy own appointment. May this be our evidence that the Holy Ghost is with us and dwelleth in us, that we may obtain victory over our iniquities, and the possession of love, joy, and peace towards God, and of gentleness, meekness, and goodness towards men, which are declared in thine own word to be the fruit of the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful.

Lead into the way of truth, O thou almighty Spirit, all who have been deceived by Satan's transforming himself into an angel of light: all those deluded souls, who lay claim to thy teaching, and boast themselves to be full of thy divine inspiration, while they are heady and high-minded, while they speak and walk contrary to thy law and testimony. Give them to know and to forsake their own delusions, before they are called to answer for bringing reproach upon thy name, for proving a rock of offence to others, and for giving occasion to the adversaries to triumph.

Pity, O Lord, those who mock at, or blaspheme the things that are spoken in the Scripture of thy work and glory. May those, who in ignorance contradict thy truth, be brought to repentance by thine own light and convictions on their hearts.

Finally, O thou Lord and Giver of all spiritual life, hear the prayers of all the members of Christ's mystical body the church: O! that thou wouldest send down thy influence from above, upon all flesh! O! that the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost might be shed abroad abundantly in every place, for the conversion of Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics; and that all who dwell within the sound of

those lively oracles, which were written by thy inspiration, may truly understand the mystery of God the Spirit, and of the Father, and of Christ, to whom be everlasting praise, might, majesty, and dominion. Amen.

XIV. *A Prayer for true Repentance.*

GLORY be to thee, O Lord God almighty and everlasting, for exalting thine only begotten Son to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to us miserable offenders, who have no power of ourselves truly to repent.

Make us, we beseech thee, O God, duly sensible of this thy mercy, and of our absolute need of it, that neither the consciousness of guilt may deter us from imploring thy pardon, nor the love of sin delude us to fancy we can of ourselves cast away our transgressions. Let us not flatter ourselves that sickness or pain, adversity or the approach of death, will necessarily dispose us to repentance. Give us to know, that if we are no longer hardened in sin, it is because the Lord maketh our hearts soft; if we are brought to God and accepted of him, may we most thankfully acknowledge that it is because the Lord hath granted us repentance unto life. May we never forget, that *every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

Thou, O Lord God! hast commanded all men eve-

ry where to repent, and declared that except we repent we must all perish. Suffer not, therefore, we beseech thee, our pride to lead us to justify ourselves, as the Scribes and Pharisees did of old, and to refuse to be baptized with the baptism of repentance. Let not the benefits we have enjoyed from education, through thy preventing or restraining grace, puff us up to think we need no repentance. Let not the commendations of men, or any fancied excellencies we possess, seduce us to imagine that we need not feel the workings of a contrite heart; or prompt us to say, *because we are innocent, therefore shall wrath be turned away from us.* From such blindness and hardness of heart, good Lord, deliver us. Suppress it in its first risings; convince us that there is no greater provocation in thy sight than for man, that is born of a woman, to exalt himself—than to say, *I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me,* for which I ought to mourn and repent before God.

And do thou who art a God of pity, instruct us by thy Spirit, that we may perfectly distinguish between true repentance and every false appearance of this precious grace. Give us to know, that freedom from gross iniquities is not sufficient proof that we are passed from death unto life, and numbered by thee, our God, amongst repenting sinners. Let no other evidence satisfy us that we are ourselves of that happy number, than the loathing of ourselves for the evil of our ways and of our doings; the forsaking of every sin, the feeling within ourselves a heart humbled for our transgressions, and depending wholly for remission of sins on the blood of thy Son. May these inseparable properties of true repentance be found in

us; may they always appear to have influence on our tempers and practice, proclaiming to all about us that we are become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

As we pray thus, O Lord! for the blessing and gift of true repentance for ourselves, so do we entreat thee to have mercy upon all who feel the anguish of a wounded spirit. Lead them to a complete repentance; give them *beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,* that they may *flourish as trees of the Lord's planting, that he may be glorified.* Pity those who are putting off their repentance to a sick bed and a dying hour; who, while they are acknowledging that they cannot but perish unless they repent, are yet so tied and bound with the chain of their sins, as to defer calling upon their God to an hour on which they cannot depend. Convince them of their madness, bring them to the right use of their reason, incline them to listen to the calls of thy word, that they may make haste to flee for refuge while it is the accepted time and the day of salvation.

Finally, we beseech thee, O God, for thy own name's sake, and for thy truth's sake, lift up by thy Spirit a standard against the profaneness which is come in upon our land like a flood. Take away from the wicked the lie in their right hand, who imagine that it shall be well with them in eternity, even though they die without true and faithful repentance.

Pull down, O God! even to the ground this stronghold of thine enemies; may none cry to themselves, Peace and safety, till they are alive from the dead, and till their iniquity is purged; till they walk as obedient children by faith in Christ Jesus.

These spiritual and everlasting mercies we implore from thee, O God of all grace! in dependence upon his all-sufficient merits, and never-ceasing intercession, who has commanded repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name to every creature, even Jesus Christ the righteous. Amen.

XV. *A Prayer for right Dispositions towards God.*

O THOU most glorious God, Father of angels and of men, and through Jesus Christ our Lord, a reconciled Father to all them that believe in his name; worthy art thou to receive from us, thy reasonable creatures, all possible expressions of our absolute dependence upon thee, of our delight in thee, and of our thankfulness for all thy benefits.

We now bow down our knees before thee, beseeching thee to give us grace to serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Root out of our hearts our natural presumption and horrible abuse of thy mercy. And work in us such a filial awe, both of thy goodness and of thy greatness, that neither the love of honour nor interest, neither the pleasure nor the gain of sin, may ever draw us to act, or speak, or desire any thing in opposition to thy will. In all our trials, however we may be tempted, still do thou be present with us, and put thy fear in our hearts, that we may never depart from thee.

To all thy other mercies, O our God! which are

flowing in upon us on every side, and new to us every moment, add that chief one, a truly thankful heart. Let us render back unto thee the little return we are able, for all thy rich benefits, even the tribute of fervent gratitude. Penetrate our souls with a sense of the infinite obligations we owe thee: constrain us by the blessings of our creation, preservation, and above all by the mercies of redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ, to present ourselves unto thee as a living sacrifice, which is our most reasonable service. Make the thought of an intelligent creature's being ungrateful to his Maker, of a sinner redeemed by the blood of God being unthankful to his deliverer, appear always to our minds the most detestable of all impieties.

Pardon, O merciful God! what we have too much cause to lament before thee, the natural unbelief of our hearts. O how ready are we to mistrust thee in any pressing difficulty; how hard do we find it in any trial to rely upon thy naked word, and to trust in thy invisible power! How often, alas! have we given thee cause to say of us, *How long is it ere this people will believe me?* From this evil heart of unbelief, most gracious God, deliver us; enable us stedfastly to rely upon every word of thy promise: in the hour of darkness may it support us, and however in appearance all things may seem to go contrary to thy word, may it be the stedfast assurance of our hearts, that not one jot or tittle of it shall pass away. On every doctrine of thy Scripture may we repose that unreserved confidence which we owe to thy divine Majesty. And, O thou most bountiful God, to whom we are beholden

for all our talents and faculties, and who hast made all things for thy own glory, incline our hearts above all things to seek thine honour. Make us careful to use our whole influence to promote the fear of thy name and the knowledge of thy truth; to bear witness in our whole deportment that the *one thing needful for man, is to do all things so that God may be glorified thereby.* Give us grace to honour thee as the Lord of conscience, and the God who searcheth the heart; by hating vain thoughts; by never suffering that to lodge within us, which we dare not to indulge, or should be afraid to own before men and angels. May we be able always to appeal to thee for the uprightness of our intentions, and in the very secrets of our hearts desire to approve ourselves uncorrupt before thee.

Constantly place before our eyes the example of thy only begotten Son, who was manifest in our flesh that we might have his perfect pattern before us for our imitation. Implant every temper in our hearts which dwelt in him in all the fullness of perfection: and give us grace to exercise more and more, towards thyself and all mankind, every amiable and divine disposition that was in Christ Jesus. To this end create in us by thy Spirit what is impossible for us to acquire by our own reflection or labour, pure love to thee. May we derive our highest joy from the knowledge of thee; and not obey thy commandments merely from a sense of thy authority, or with a view to the recompence of reward. O! raise our minds by divine love far above a perishing world, and from being enslaved either by the desire of its good things, or by a fear of its evils. Grant that thy love may so unite us to thyself, that our meditation of thee may be sweet; our

chief delight to speak of thy grace; our hunger and thirst to enjoy thy presence, and to awake up in the morning of the resurrection, after thy likeness. And till that blessed change shall come, teach us to shew forth the force of our love to thee by delighting in prayer, and in the lively use of all those means, by which the remembrance of thee is maintained in the soul, and thy perfections more and more displayed. And the more we know thee, the more let the sense of thy glory keep us vile in our own eyes. And walking humbly before thee under an abiding conviction of the holiness which becomes thy divine majesty, may we ever judge ourselves unworthy so much as to lift up our eyes unto heaven, or to take thy name within our lips; though thou humblest thyself to dwell indeed with us, by nature thine enemies, and rebels against thee.

With this substantial and spiritual worship may we ever worship thee, O Lord our God! the author of our being, the fountain of all our happiness. Let every thing short of such substantial godliness appear no better to us than empty form. Let no barren observance of ceremonies, no reputation for sanctity, be ever substituted by us for these gracious tempers towards thee our God, or be esteemed any sort of compensation for the want of them. Till we finish our course, teach us more and more to sanctify the Lord our God in our hearts; and be thou ever unto us our fear and our dread, our delight and our exceeding joy. That so when we leave this world to enter upon eternity, we may find the pleasures and delights of angels and glorified saints perfectly adapted to us, and the very happiness we were longing for.

We beg the accomplishment of these our requests unto the uttermost, for the glory of thy great name, and through the mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son and our only Saviour. Amen.

XVI. *A Prayer for proper Tempers towards our Fellow-creatures.*

BLESSED, for ever blessed be thy name, O thou most glorious Lord our God! for thy tender regard to the peace and comfort of every individual among us. Blessed be thy name, that there is nothing in the least degree hurtful or justly irksome to others, which thou hast not strictly charged us to abhor; nothing beneficial, which thou hast not charged us to practise.

But we have cause, O Lord! to be ashamed and afflicted when we call to mind how much our relations, friends, and neighbours, may have to allege against us, for our violation of our duty; how much to accuse us for some selfish temper or other expressed towards them. When we retire solemnly to examine ourselves, what manner of persons we have been in our behaviour towards our fellow-creatures, alas! how humbling are our reflections! how totally void were we once of all Christian dispositions! how sadly defective in them still! O! how do our own hearts condemn us; and how much more must thou, the

searcher of hearts, the zealous friend of the human race, condemn us also!

For these offences do thou humble us, O God! make us appear in some degree as odious to ourselves, for having ever committed them, as we have been on this account in thy sight. May we go loathing ourselves even to the grave for the many instances of unkindness, injustice, falsehood, or hardness of heart towards our fellow-creatures, of which we have been guilty: for which nothing but the blood of Jesus our great High-priest can atone.

Now, truly desirous of offending thee no more, by sinning against our neighbour, we beseech thee to form in us an hatred of every kind of falsehood and deceit. Suffer not the force of custom, nor the strength of our own selfishness, to hurry us on knowingly to deceive or dissemble, in order to profit ourselves. Give us grace to speak the truth from our hearts, so exactly in things little as well as great, that none may have cause ever again to charge us with deceiving them through a false tongue. Mortify, we beseech thee, O God, in us all love to the world, which would prompt us to seek unlawful gain, and injure another for our own present advantage. In every season of peculiar temptation to dishonesty, do thou withhold us from the evil, and open our eyes so perfectly to discern it as a provocation to God and ruin to ourselves, that we may ever be kept from being unrighteous either in a great matter or a small. And may all those, who in any peculiar manner are related to us, as our masters, our servants, or dependents, ever be convinced by our carriage towards them, that we make a conscience of doing them justice.

Neither let it suffice, O Lord our God, to be conscious to ourselves, that we are no liars nor extortioners, neither oppressive nor unjust in any degree towards our fellow-creatures: but do thou fill us with bowels of mercies, and with love without dissimulation towards all men. In cheerful obedience to thy high command, in imitation of thy own, and thy dear Son's blessed example, may we be glad to shew kindness and to do good to all! If rich, may it be our joy to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; if wise in the things of God, to instruct the ignorant; if invested with authority and power, to give protection to the injured, and deliverance to those who are oppressed with wrong. And where we have no ability or talents to be serviceable in any of these respects to our distressed fellow-creatures, may we yet feel our hearts fervent in prayer to recommend them to thy all-sufficient mercy. Above all, we beg that it may be our cordial wish, and our most constant study to promote the welfare of the souls of men; may our bowels yearn towards the ungodly and the careless; and whenever opportunity offers, may we be urgent in persuading them to seek after God!

Enable us to exercise a spirit of candour and lenity towards the characters and the conduct of men. O! quench that unhallowed fire within, that inflames our tongue with bitterness. O! take away that hypocrisy and blindness, which leads us to take high offence at the mote in our brother's eye, while we remain easy with the beam in our own. By thy almighty grace make us kind, tender-hearted, and merciful. Instead of harshness and bitterness towards offenders against

thee, ourselves, or others, may we exercise gentleness and godly sorrow. May we never rejoice in iniquity, as if the fall of others were an exaltation of our souls above them. Weaken and destroy more and more, we beseech thee, O our God, that stubborn root of pride, which upon every provocation brings forth wrath and anger, bitterness, clamour, and evil-speaking.

Apply the example of the meek and lowly Jesus to our minds, O God, with such force, as shall cover us with confusion, whenever we find that our look, our speech, or any part of our deportment is not governed by brotherly kindness. May thy patience and long-suffering, O Lord, with us, establish through the influence of thy grace, the same disposition in us towards all men. Through the help of our God may we do what with man is utterly impossible, love cordially our bitterest foes. Such supernatural power may we derive from the cross of Christ; from our beholding with true faith our God and Saviour laying down his life for us his enemies, and praying for his murderers.

Finally, grant that we may not only persevere in the constant exercise of all truth and justice, love, mercy, and meekness towards all men; but in the practice of all these duties be clothed with humility, take ourselves the very lowest place, and in lowliness of mind unfeignedly esteem every one better than ourselves.

Thus may we stand perfect and complete in thy will; so that all with whom we have to do, may behold the genuine fruits of true faith in Christ, in our constant practice towards them, in what things soever are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good re-

port. Grant us, O God, all that we now request for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom with thyself, and the Holy Ghost, be glory world without end. Amen.

XVII. *A Prayer for the due Discharge of Domestic Duties.*

O LORD and heavenly Father, who hast commanded us conscientiously to discharge each duty we owe one to another, take away, we beseech thee, from us all stubbornness, pride, and self-conceit; all envy, hatred, and ill-will, which would lead us to despise thy gracious restraints, and destroy that harmony which thou wouldest have to reign in every family. From the least to the greatest member of each house, give them grace to walk before thee unto all well-pleasing.

Teach and incline *servants* to do their work with singleness of eye, as unto Christ; to be ambitious of serving their masters with all fidelity, and of preventing all just cause of anger or rebuke from them for obstinacy, sloth, or carelessness. Grant them wisdom to consider their station not as any hardship, much less any disgrace to them, but as the post which thy fatherly love hath appointed them to fill. Give them to understand, to their great peace and strong consolation, that by doing their work from a principle of faith and love to Christ Jesus, they may stand as high in thy favour, and grow as rich towards God, as if

their condition entitled them to all respect from the world. And may they never imagine they are religious and Christians altogether, any longer than they abstain from all those frauds and deceits, which they are tempted to use for filthy lucre's sake.

Be merciful and gracious, O God, to *all heads and governors of families.* Save them from haughtiness of carriage, from passionate reproaches, and every kind of unchristian treatment of their inferiors and dependents. O! convince the rich that it is not their merit, but thy providence alone that makes the difference of station, and appoints the subordination: not that they should be as tyrants in their houses, and imperious to their servants, but that they should add to the comfort of those who are under them. Enable them therefore carefully to avoid hurting those who labour for them, by their frowardness, and behaving towards them with such rudeness, as they would be ashamed to shew to any equal. Imprint upon their minds a lively remembrance that they have a master in heaven, who is no respecter of the persons of men, before whom both masters and servants must give a strict and solemn account of their behaviour to each other. Inspire all who preside in families not only with justice, but with mercy and pity towards their servants. Like the good centurion, whose praise is in the Gospel, may they sympathize with them in all their afflictions, be glad to alleviate their burden, when sickness and old age oppress them, and to sweeten the bitter cup that is appointed them to drink. Give them grace to teach their servants the fear of the Lord by their own example, and to let their light so shine before them, that they may be led to glorify

God also, in whose hands is their breath, and whose are all their ways.

Dispose, O Lord, the hearts of *all parents* to receive and obey thy commands addressed in a peculiar manner to them. Teach them always to regard their children as immortal souls intrusted to their care, and for whose nurture and admonition in the fear of the Lord they are strictly answerable: and may they esteem it their greatest pleasure, and their highest honour, to be teaching their children thy sacred truths, when they sit with them in the house, and when they walk by the way, when they lie down, and when they rise up. Give them to observe with hearts sensibly affected, the natural depravity too apparent in every one of their offspring, and to be solicitous to bring them by early discipline and instruction to Him who alone can deliver from it. Make them vigilant to check the first sallies of their vile affections, to furnish them with the means of knowing God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and to habituate them from their childhood to some profitable employment of their time and their understanding, as they are able to bear it. Keep all parents from setting a bad example before the eyes of their children, and so teaching them an evil lesson against themselves. And may they dread nothing more than the insupportable doom of being condemned as accessaries to the damnation of their own children by their worldliness, sensuality, and neglect of their souls. And as thou knowest that no parents are of themselves sufficient to educate their children according to thy will, O! do thou fill them with wisdom and discretion. Guide them continually with thine eye, between the extremes of shewing a false indul-

gence or an irksome severity to the fruit of their own bodies. Bless altogether the relation thou hast established between them, so that parents may have the joy of seeing their children growing up as pleasant plants before thee, and children have reason to rise cup and all their parents blessed, and to praise God for them in time and in eternity.

And do thou, O God, so influence and form the minds of *all children*, and turn their hearts towards their parents, that they may behave towards them with all reverence, obedience, and love; not stubborn when corrected for their faults, not heedless when instructed, nor ungrateful to forget how much they are bound to administer to the comfort of their parents, and to requite them.

Grant also, we beseech thee, that all who are *united by the ties of holy wedlock* may live in mutual regard for each other and in all tenderness of love; not only free from all contention and strife, and from openly giving each other offence, but helping each other, and shewing themselves patterns of every gracious and Christian affection.

In an especial manner we beg of thee, O God, that we of this family, who are now kneeling before thee, may be forgiven for Christ's sake, all the instances in which we have been guilty of irreverence, unkindness, and passion one towards another. Make us sensible of our transgression, heartily sorry for it, and more vigilant for the future. O! give unto us, and every family, more of thy grace and power, that we may be of one mind, who dwell together in one house on earth: that at the last day, when we appear

to take our trial at the bar of God, we may not be accusers of each other, for exercising any malevolence of temper, but witnesses of the grace of our common Lord in making us dwell together in perfect amity and Christian love. Grant, O God, these our petitions, and let us all perceive the accomplishment of them by the increase of harmony, peace, and love among ourselves. We ask it for the sake, and through the intercession of our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

XVIII. *A Prayer for Self-denial.*

WORTHY art thou, O Lord God almighty and everlasting, to receive from us all honour and praise, all love and obedience: for thou hast created all things, and for thy good-will and pleasure they are and were created! Thou hast an absolute right over us, for thou art our continual Preserver, as well as the Author of our very being: thou hast redeemed us out of the hands of our enemies, that we should be a people to serve thee: we cannot therefore question thy absolute claim to the diligent use and improvement of our souls and bodies in thy service.

But we confess, O Lord, our shame, our sin, and misery, that we have dared to set up our will against thine, and to act as if we were independent of thee. With all humility we confess that though we have professed ourselves believers in Christ, we have not been ready to deny ourselves, and take up our cross. We

have, alas! cherished and indulged the cravings of our corrupt nature: we have encouraged those sinful affections of our hearts, which it was our duty to oppose with violence, and, through divine grace, strangle in the birth. We have even thought the happiness of man's life to consist in fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. In consequence of such blindness and depravity, we have been sinning against thee our God, not only by some gross acts of rebellion, but in the general aim and business of our lives; by a carnal mind, which was enmity against thee, and would not brook the control of thy authority.

Hold up, O Lord, our guilt in this respect before us, till confusion of face and a holy shame overwhelm us; till we return unto thee our God with tears and supplications, to have the sin of a headstrong will blotted out, for his righteousness' sake who pleased not himself. And O, give unto us, we beseech thee, our God, thy holy Spirit, that through him we may mortify all the deeds and lusts of the body of sin. Inspire us with a godly jealousy, lest our table should ever become a snare to us, and our plenty lead us into a surfeiting, drunkenness, or *intemperance* of any kind. May we eat for strength, not for gratification; and drink for thirst, not to inflame ourselves with liquor, wherein is excess. Through thy grace may we continually keep our bodies under, and suppress every sensual rising within us, which would lead us to pamper them.

Keep us by thy mighty power, O God, from walking in the lusts of *uncleanness,* as the impulse of our nature would prompt us to do. Fill us with a con-

stant dread, not only of the practice of adultery and fornication, but of every expression of impurity by the eye, the tongue, or the heart. Maintain within us an invincible aversion to all foolish talking, and filthy jests, to all sights, books, and amusements, however fashionable, which defile the mind and war against the soul.

Enable us to withstand and vanquish our natural desires after *riches* and *worldly greatness*. Make us content with such things as we have; and let our whole conversation be without covetousness. Inspire us with the will and the power to resist and conquer, in its first appearances, the love of money, which is the root of all evil; and to watch with a suspicious eye the complacency we take in the prosperity allotted us. O! keep us satisfied with thyself, O God, as our all-sufficient portion, and never suffer us to indulge so much as a single wish for any thing of this world more than food and raiment.

Mortify, O Lord, the pride of our hearts, which thirsts for *praise* and honour from men; which would lead us into base compliances and unchristian conformity to the world, to preserve its esteem of our character. Let our ambition be to please thee; and let us willingly give up our name to be abused by the men of this world, rather than forfeit the praise of God. Conquer, O Lord, not only our corrupt love of the praise of men, but our selfish dread also of their revilings and resentment against us for righteousness' sake. Make us bold as lions for thy truth and honour, and ready on all fit occasions to witness a good confession with our mouths, of what we verily believe in our hearts. Give us a complete victory over our

natural cowardice and unbelief, which would lead us to swerve at any time from thy commandments, through fear of loss or want.

Cleanse us, O God, from all *inordinate affection* to every created good and comfort. Effectually control our hearts, and keep them from that sinful attachment to our nearest and dearest relations and friends, of which we are always in extreme danger, when we love them as we ought, and are beloved by them: never may they usurp the throne of our affections, never may we be suffered to put them in the place of God, and make them instead of himself the chief spring of our delight and joy.

Help us to mortify our *pride,* which would make us wise in our own eyes, which would join us with the disputers of this world in cavilling at those truths that have the sanction of thine own infallible word.

Finally, O God, we beseech thee, incline us by thy grace to think soberly of ourselves, in opposition to the innate pride and haughtiness of our hearts. Teach us to oppose every suggestion that would make us trust in ourselves as righteous, or to imagine we can be justified in thy sight, but through the merits and righteousness of God our Saviour. Whatever we have done for thee, whatever we have received from thee, let this, living and dying, be our request; God be merciful to us sinners, through the atonement, and for the sake of him, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Amen.

XIX. *A Supplication for the Spirit of Prayer.*

MOST merciful and gracious God, who hast promised to fulfill the desire of them that fear thee; and to give to every one that asketh of thee; who, for our encouragement to come boldly to the throne of grace, hast given thy Son to be a merciful and faithful High-priest; draw us, we beseech thee, by thy Holy Spirit to the devout exercise of prayer. Convince us deeply of our guilt and weakness, of our blindness and depravity, that so with great earnestness and constancy we may cry unto thee, the God of our life and of our strength, to enable us to perform every Christian duty, to fill us with all knowledge and with all goodness.

Let not our prayer be a mere service of the lips, or be offered up only to pacify conscience. May it be the hunger and thirst of our souls after thyself, and after all those spiritual blessings, without which we must perish for ever. Create and maintain in us, O God! a sensibility of the infinite worth of spiritual blessings, and a dread of spiritual evils, that we may pray always, and not faint. Let our wants be so pressing as to force us to pray. May we understand that thy ear hearkens to the most stammering tongue, and to the groaning of all that bewail their captivity to sin. And that we may never be at a loss for matter of supplication, confession, and thanksgiving, teach us to observe narrowly the various workings of our evil nature, to know our peculiar duties and temptations,

and to remember the daily mercies of our God to us sinners.

And as thou knowest the great corruption of our hearts; how apt we are, from the practice of the world and the suggestions of Satan, lightly to esteem the all-important duty of prayer; O Lord, impress with power upon our hearts the example of all thy honoured and glorified saints, and the practice of thy dear Son our only Saviour in the days of his flesh. Let their assiduity and earnestness in prayer make us always ashamed and self-condemned for any backwardness we feel to the exercise of this duty. Give us an understanding to know that the prayer of faith is the only appointed means of obtaining the blessings which enrich the soul; the only instrument of preserving the connexion of all the graces of the divine life; and that no higher affront can be offered to thy name than to live without prayer.

Do thou, O God, who requirest men to come before thee with such dispositions as shall ascribe to thee the honour due to thy most holy name, prepare our hearts to pray, with a determined opposition to the whole body of sin, with a stedfast purpose to cast away all our transgressions, and to have respect to all thy commandments. Convince us, O Lord, that if we regard iniquity in our heart, thou wilt not hear us; but if we call upon thee in truth, thou wilt hear us, and bless us in our deed.

In all our addresses to thee, may we draw nigh with a contrite heart and with an humble spirit. May a sense of our defilement and our sin, a knowledge of thine infinite purity, and a conviction of the distance

between sinners and the eternal God, fill our souls with humility and self-abasement.

Deliver us, O God, from turning our very prayers into sin, and provoking thy wrath by daring to approach thee in our own name, trusting in our own goodness. To Jesus, who endured the cross, and ever liveth to make intercession, may we always look in all our prayers, and bring every offering unto him, as the only person in heaven or earth, for whose sake and at whose hands it becomes thee to receive our requests.

And grant us full assurance of the success of all our prayers which have thy glory for their aim, an humble heart for their root, and the intercession of Christ engaged for their success. In all our devotions may we through Christ and the Spirit's influence have access to thee with a firm dependence, and with an increasing delight in this holy exercise. And we beseech thee, O God, to fill our hearts with such conceptions of the truth of thy promises, made to all who call upon thee; such faith in the name and power of Christ employed in behalf of all believing supplicants who approach thee; and such a remembrance of the happy fruits of prayer experienced by all the generations of thy children, that we may esteem prayer our highest privilege, and be more and more fervent and diligent in the use of it, till all our prayers shall be completely answered, and changed into everlasting praise.

And as we beg for the Spirit of prayer, so we request also what is equally necessary for us, the love of thy blessed word. Thou hast caused all holy Scripture to be written for our reproof, for our correction, for our instruction in righteousness; Oh! teach us,

we beseech thee, the true meaning and interpretation thereof. Let us not go wrong out of the way of thy commandments, by leaning to our own understanding, or by calling any man master. Give us to delight in reading thy word and pondering it in our hearts. And as we read, may we drink deep into its spirit, be governed by it in all our sentiments, tempers, and practice ; that in the end we may enjoy that eternal life, which is revealed in thy word, and promised to all them that obey it. Hear our prayers, and do abundantly for us above all we can ask or think, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XX. *A Prayer for spiritual Joy and Peace.*

O GOD, whose kingdom in the hearts of thy faithful people is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, we lament before thee the sinful propensity of our nature, leading us to seek after earthly gratifications, and the base pleasures of sin. Too long, alas ! we have sought for them, delighted in them, and adhered to them, as if thou wert a God in whose service there was no delight, nor any thing to make happy the souls of thy people.

Receive us, O God, for we return unto thee. Mercifully pardon for Jesus' sake this our contempt of thy glorious name and our great wickedness before thee. Too long have we walked in the vanity of our minds,

alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in us. But now we entreat thee, O gracious Father, keep our hearts by thy power that they may never be again allured through the deceitfulness of the pleasures of sin. O let not the vain, infectious joys of sinners appear any longer desirable in our eyes: give us light to trace them to their final issue, and always to be assured that the end of such joys must be everlasting weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Do thou, O God, come unto us, and make thine abode with us. Maintain by thy presence in our souls that true delight, which is the foretaste of heaven, and the fruit of the Holy Ghost; that so we may rejoice in thee always, and in the Lord Jesus Christ who is our hope and our peace. Grant us grace, O God our sovereign good, to find more joy in thee than in all creatures: more than in health and beauty; more than in glory or honour; more than in riches and power; more than in knowledge and friendship; more than in reputation and praise; more than in all things which thou canst give us; for thou art infinitely more amiable than all thy blessings.

Withdraw not from thy church, nor hide thyself, O Lord, from them that seek thy face and thy strength evermore. O let all thy children now taste of the same spiritual joy which was communicated by thee to thy saints in old time. Let each of them from happy experience be able to say, I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation: I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

And in order that we may cease to desire the plea-

sures of sin, and not grow weary of any trials in the way of our duty, reveal thy truth in our hearts: cause it to shine with such beauty and glory as shall excite in us delightful sensations, and make it as pleasant to our souls as light is to our eyes. Impress us with a sense of that high and glorious relation we bear to thee, as thy adopted children by faith in Christ Jesus. Fill us with the knowledge of the things that are freely given to us of God, and send into each of our hearts the Spirit of adoption, whereby we may cry, Abba, Father.

And, O God, grant that we may be no more anxious for any thing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known unto thee. Persuade us more and more with a divine energy, that thy eyes, O Lord, are over the righteous, and thine ears are open to their prayers; that so amidst crosses and sufferings we may find peace in trouble, and delight in resigning ourselves to so bountiful and gracious a God. Let us be heartily engaged in seeking thy kingdom and its righteousness in the first place.

Pardon the great profaneness, and pity the miserable ignorance of those who are alive to the joys of sin, but slow of heart to believe that the fruit of righteousness is peace. Convince them by happy experience, that the least glimpse of thy love does more abundantly delight the soul, than the fullest indulgence to corrupt appetites. O give them to feel how pure the joy is, how exquisite the delight which flows from thee, the original source of all goodness, above what can possibly be derived from indulging the filthiness of the flesh or the spirit. Persuade them that all earthly

joys leave nothing but disappointment, or soon produce satiety, compared to the exalted pleasures of lively communion with God. Convert the proud, and all those who go about defaming thy service, and slandering the footsteps of thine Anointed. May all that dwell on the earth hear this joyful truth; may young and old, rich and poor, ponder it in their hearts, that the Lord is a sun and a shield, that he gives grace and glory, and that no good thing will he withhold from them that lead a godly life. And may the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort our hearts, and by this means establish us in every good word and work. Amen.

PRAYERS

FOR

PRIVATE PERSONS,

Upon Various Subjects and Occasions.

XXI. A Prayer for one convinced of Sin.

GOD be merciful to me a sinner: a sinner beyond expression! How shall I lift up mine eyes towards thee, O thou most holy, or take thy name within my polluted lips! O Lord, thou needest not my confession to inform thee of my guilt, for thine eye hath been ever upon my path; and of the things that have come into my mind, thou hast known every one of them. The vanity of my childhood, the folly of my youth, the obstinacy and rebellion of my riper years, are all written in thy book. Alas! thou knowest I was conceived in sin, and have lived in sin ever since I was born: all thy commandments have I broken, all thy mercies have I abused, trifled with thy patience, resisted thy Spirit, and rejected thy Gospel, times without number.

Foolish and ignorant, stupid and hardened, unthankful and unfaithful have I been; a transgressor

from the womb;—such has been my life. What then must my heart be, the fountain from whence all these streams of bitterness have flowed? O Lord, thou hast said it, and I cannot deny it, my heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; I am wholly defiled, there is no sound part in me. I am full of pride and ignorance, unbelief and self-will; my boasted strength is weakness, and my best righteousness as an unclean thing before thee. I owe thee ten thousand talents, but have nothing to pay. I am bound to a perfect obedience, but cannot perform it. O wretched man! who shall deliver me? Wherewithal shall I come before the most high God? Will sighs, or tears, or promises answer the demands of thy law, satisfy thy justice, and avert thy righteous anger? or where shall I hide my guilty head? O Lord, my flesh trembleth, my heart faileth before thee. I am afraid of thy judgments. I have deserved them all; and shouldest thou now pour forth thy wrath upon me unto the uttermost, even in the midst of my sufferings I must own thy justice. Shouldest thou shut out my prayers, and say, Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire, I must be dumb.

But, O Lord, though I have thus destroyed myself, is there no help, no hope in thee? Hast thou not revealed thyself in thy word as "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin?" And hast thou not commended thy love to poor lost sinners, in giving thine only Son to be the propitiation for sin? Hath not thy kind providence put thy Gospel into my hands, to prevent my sinking

into despair? Thou hast been pleased to inform me of the sinless life and meritorious death of thy only begotten Son, of the compassion of his heart towards the chief of sinners, and of the intercession he ever lives to make for the worst that come to thee by him. And though it be among my most abominable sins, and the cause of them, that I so long slighted this record of thy Son, I now see and feel, that except he save me, I must undoubtedly perish for ever. All that believe in him he will save; and I am taught in thy word that faith is thy gift, and of thy operation in the soul. O bestow and work in me the work of faith with power, I beseech thee, unworthy as I am.

Enable me to behold the suffering wounded Lamb of God, who poured forth his soul an offering for transgressors. Help me to believe that he has his own-self borne my sins in his own body on the tree; that he has delivered me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me. Let me feel the powerful efficacy of that blood which cleanseth from all sin. O let that Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow, testify of him to me, and glorify him in my eyes, that my troubled conscience may enjoy peace, and my soul find rest in Christ.

Gird me with strength for thy blessed service, and redeem me by thy mighty grace from the power of all iniquity, from the hands of all my enemies, that I may live devoted to thee for ever. O spare me, good Lord, that I may be a monument of the riches of thy mercy, and an instrument of spreading thy praise, who art just, and yet the Justifier of the sinner and the ungodly, through him whom thou hast held forth to

be a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood. Amen.

XXII. A Prayer for the Increase of Faith in Christ.

ENLARGE, I beseech thee, O Lord my God, my heart to receive thy precious promises in all their power and fullness. If the faint hope I already have that thou art my reconciled Father, were not founded upon thy own faithful word, it would indeed be presumption to ask of thee to confirm it to a full assurance. But since thou hast given to them that believe exceeding great and precious promises, that they might be partakers of a divine nature, and by thy immutable word and oath hast provided that all who fly to Jesus Christ for refuge, should have strong consolation, O give me to enjoy this inestimable benefit. Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!

Adored be thy free grace, for what thou hast already done in me; but perfect thy work, O Lord: make me strong in faith, that on all occasions I may give glory to God. Thou hast shewn me something of my own misery. I see, I feel myself a lost creature without thy salvation. Thou hast also given me some understanding to know him that is true, even the almighty Saviour; and every hope of mercy not founded upon him, I renounce. I have cast myself at his feet, and said, Lord, save me, or I perish. I cannot.

doubt his power; but, Oh! forgive me, that I so often doubt his love and willingness to save such as I am, though I know for this purpose he appeared in the form of a servant, bled upon the cross, and gave up the ghost in groans and agonies.

O let me know in whom I have believed, so as no more to doubt, nor be in darkness. Persuade me fully of my own sincerity (if I am sincere) in intrusting my dearest concerns into the hands of Christ, and convince me of his willingness and ability to keep that which I have committed to him against the great day. Let me see that he is able to preserve me from falling, to support me under all my trials, to defend me against all my enemies through this state of warfare, and at length to present me faultless before thy glorious presence with exceeding joy.

Fain would I rely upon thy faithful promises; fain would I rejoice in hope; but, alas! an evil heart of unbelief deprives me of those comforts and privileges provided in the Gospel for returning sinners. Let the Sun of righteousness shine forth with healing in his beams, scattering the mists and clouds which hang upon my mind. Give me grace to seek this blessing by diligently reading thy holy word, by being instant in prayer, constant in the use of all ordinances, and circumspect in all my conversation. Let me not remain ignorant of the devices of Satan, that he may neither terrify me by his malicious suggestions, nor seduce me under the appearances of an angel of light, to depart one step from the rule of thy word, either to do what thou hast not commanded, or to expect what thou hast not promised. But having my heart,

my hope, my eye fixed upon thee alone, may I cheerfully wait for the accomplishment of all the good, both in time and in eternity, promised to them that are in Christ Jesus. I ask this in his name. Amen.

XXIII. A Prayer for Chastity.

O THOU God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast called us, not unto uncleanness but unto holiness, whose will is our sanctification, that we should possess our bodies in honour and chastity, not in the lusts of concupiscence, as the Gentiles who know not God: I bow down my knees to bewail before thee the inherent corruption of my nature, my desire to defile myself in those things which I know in common with the brute beasts.

I lament before thee, O God, that my imagination has been dreadfully polluted, and the thoughts and desires of my heart miserably subjected to this fierce passion. O my most gracious God, had it not been for thy restraining grace, I had doubtless fallen a prey to this common sin. Do thou, therefore, who hast kept me from falling, vanquish all the uncleanness of my heart. Fortify me against it, and fill me with a detestation of lewdness as a deadly evil.

And as the wickedness of my heart would seduce me into this sin by promising repentance and amendment, cause me to understand that the sin of fornication, above all others, takes away the understanding,

leading on those who are enslaved by it like an ox that goeth to the slaughter, or a fool to the correction of the stocks. Convince me of thy utter abhorrence of this sin, and the impossibility of escaping thy displeasure, if I take part in the voluptuousness of the unclean. Make me remember thy judgments in old time upon those who committed fornication, and all the express declarations of thy own word, that whoremongers and adulterers shall have their portion in the lake of brimstone and fire. Let not vain words deceive me, nor the practice of the ungodly lessen in my sight the iniquity of this sin, nor the vast multitude of those who live in it make me once doubt thy veracity, and determinate purpose to destroy the unclean, both body and soul in hell.

And that I may not be overtaken by this lust, let me avoid all society and acquaintance with the debauched, and all their haunts of idleness and places of entertainment. Into their assembly never let me enter. Give me to apply myself with industry to my business, knowing that idleness is the great encourager of unclean desires and practices. Enable me to turn away my eyes from every inflaming object; to be sober and careful in my discourse, not giving way myself to foolish talking or jesting, nor staying to hear those who do. Give me grace to eat for strength, not for pampering the flesh. Lord, make me to take heed and beware of cherishing the feeblest motion of this lust, knowing from the history of God's saints how great a fire such a little spark has kindled when indulged. As I profess myself a Christian, grant I may with horror reject every temptation of offering such

an insult to my Redeemer, as to take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot.

And lest my heart should envy sinners in their pleasures, O Lord, give me grace to reflect on all those marks of thy vengeance against the sin of lewdness visible in this world, as well as reserved for the unclean in that which is eternal. Let me not forget what loathsome diseases, what bitter pains, what poverty and want are the fruit of lust! what quarrels, what bloodshed, what infamy and death proceed from chambering and wantonness. Let the knowledge of these things make me urgent and instant day after day to cry unto thee to preserve me blameless in spirit, soul, and body; and that I may never gratify an appetite implanted by thee for noble purposes, but in the way which thou hast appointed. Grant this, holy Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

XXIV. A Prayer for a young Person.

WHITHER, O Lord, shall a young man go, or how shall he be able to escape all the snares which beset him, and all the corruptions within his own heart ever ready to betray him? Where, but to thy throne of grace, O God of all power? Here therefore do I present my supplication, humbly beseeching thee to give unto me that faith in thy word, which shall make me receive all thy promises with delight and comfort, and stand in awe of doing any

thing to incur thy threatenings. Establish in me the fear of thy eternal majesty, and a stedfast purpose of heart to walk before thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

Subdue my natural pride, which would lead me to rebel against thee, O my God, and lightly to regard the plainest and most positive of thy commands. Quench those lusts, which the fire of youth ever kindles in the heart. Instead of being heady, high-minded, rash and presumptuous, open mine ear to receive instruction: inspire me with meekness, to be humble in my whole behaviour, and ever to follow that which is good. Create in me a constant mistrust of myself, an aversion to the company of the lewd, the gay and thoughtless; and a jealousy of those things to which I find myself most vehemently inclined; knowing that by nature I am altogether earthly, sensual, and devilish.

Now in my youth, grant I may ascribe unto thee the honour due unto thy name, by preferring always the knowledge of thy truth, the sense of thy love, and observance of thy will, to all the pleasures of sin and vanity. O convince me that the beginning of sin, as well as of strife, is as when one letteth out water. Teach me how soon sin will ensnare, how insensibly entangle, and how difficult it is to escape from those evil tempers and indulgences, when once complied with, which might easily be vanquished by resistance at first.

Let thy Spirit be my perpetual monitor, guide, and comforter, through thy word. Root out of my vain heart all good opinion of myself, all haughtiness of

spirit, all stubbornness and moroseness of disposition, all affectation of conforming to fashionable sin and folly, and every wanton imagination, the miserable diseases of my fallen nature. Help me, O my God, to mortify them all, to advance in grace as I grow in years, to gain a more complete victory over my corruptions, and to make a constant progress in the knowledge, faith, and consolations of Christ Jesus the Lord; in whose early youth I see an example of holiness and righteousness, which I am commanded to follow, and through whom I hope to be accepted unto life for evermore. Amen.

XXV. A Prayer for a Student educating for Holy Orders.

O THOU Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift: by whose goodness to me I am training up in knowledge and learning, that I may be thoroughly furnished in due time to be a minister in thy church; to thee I make my prayer for a blessing upon my studies. Sanctify and purify, I beseech thee, my heart, that I may not study for reputation, to obtain the name of learned and acute, but only to be an instrument in thy hand, of glory to thy name, of good to the immortal souls of men. And as authors are infinite, as much reading is a weariness to the flesh, causing distraction, and tending only to unprofitable questions; for this reason, I

beseech thee, so to direct me that I may know what books to choose and what to refuse, and constantly apply myself to that course of studies which will best prepare me for thy holy service.

Preserve me from the infection of false doctrine, naturally pleasing to the pride and corruptions of nature; and, as the only way of being safe from falling into error, grant that I may give myself up entirely to be guided by thy Spirit in daily and earnest prayer. And as thy written word is the only repository of thy will, and of that wisdom which is far better than gold, O make me a diligent reader of the Scripture. May I exercise myself in it day and night. Let it dwell richly in me, and be as much more pleasant to my soul than all human writings, as thou, O God, art wiser and better than men.

Give me wisdom to associate with none but those by whose sobriety, gravity, and good example I may receive benefit. Rather let me choose solitude, and be satisfied with reproach, than walk in the way of sinners, and, for company's sake, destroy my soul, or wound my conscience. Excite in me a constant jealousy of my amusements and recreations, knowing how difficult it is not to exceed the bounds of moderation, and how soon the affections are drawn off from better things, and enslaved. Let my care therefore be to redeem my time, and to find my study and my God my exceeding joy.

In all things do thou order my conversation. Grant I may be temperate in meat and drink and sleep; free from levity and folly, and grave in my deportment; respectful to my superiors, amiable to my equals,

meek towards my inferiors, courteous and affable to all. Give me ability and aptness for scholastic exercises, which are to strengthen my faculties, to polish the mind, and to be the ornament of my future life; that so I may be sanctified and prepared as a vessel of honour fit for the master's use. And may I take upon me the high office of a teacher of souls, not as one who prostitutes his conscience and lies unto the Holy Ghost for a morsel of bread, but as one who is really moved by a desire of saving perishing sinners. Hear me for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

XXVI. A Prayer proper for one in Trade or Merchandise.

RIGHTEOUS art thou, O God, in the doom pronounced on all the human race for the offence of our first parents, that in the sweat of our brow we should eat bread. And not only in justice, but in mercy hast thou ordained that we should be active and laborious, to be useful to others, and to be preserved ourselves from all the evils of idleness and sloth. Thy only begotten Son, when he took upon him our flesh, put his hand to the nail, and his right hand to the workman's hammer. It was his meat and drink to do thy will, and finish the work thou gavest him to do. Thy holy angels likewise are in action without ceasing, ministering unto them that shall be heirs of salvation. Who or what then am I, O Lord God, that I should

expect to have no business or labour appointed for me, requiring my close attention? Let not this be esteemed a burden, but give me grace with all alacrity to apply myself to my particular employment.

And as I am fixed in business by thy unerring wisdom, not for my own private interest alone, but for the good of society, O implant and increase within me a principle of truth, honesty, and good-will to men, that I may always abhor the thought of enriching myself by the gains of secret fraud or base deception. Keep in me from day to day a conscientious regard to that rule of thine, designed to extirpate all the diseases of trade, of doing unto others as I would they should do unto me. Let me never forget that the wages of unrighteousness bring with them the curse of God, and that the prosperity of the wicked shall destroy them. Let me always remember that better is a little which the righteous hath, than great revenues without right.

And as thou knowest how naturally selfish man is, and how prone to the love of money, which is the root of all evil; as thou seest how much in the daily course of my business and employment I am in danger of being led to think gain the one thing needful; O my God, save me from the snares and temptations of covetousness. Let not riches with their enchantments destroy me, nor honours or pleasures entice me. O let me ever see them to be the fleeting vanities they are, and may I often anticipate the day when they cannot profit at all. Rivet, O my God, upon my mind the intrinsic everlasting value of thy love, and of the comforts of thy Spirit, and a remembrance of the happy and ever-blessed state of the obedient and faith-

ful in Christ Jesus; that so amidst all my gains I may surely get that treasure that shall never fail.

And in order that the business I have to do in the world may not prove the destruction of my soul, grant me a godly jealousy over it, and a perpetual suspicion of its tendency to extinguish in me all sense of spiritual blessings, and to alienate my heart from God. Knowing how many thousands have been swallowed up and lost in the inordinate pursuit of their business; seeing the world intent only upon amassing wealth; and feeling the same passion kindling within my own corrupted heart: I earnestly beseech thee, O God, by thy own bowels of mercies, by thy dear Son's blood, put thy Spirit within me, causing me to use this world as not abusing it, and to manifest my moderation in the midst of my diligent application to my calling. And never suffer me in judgment for my sins to be so immersed in trade and merchandise, as to make me cold and formal in prayer, backward to holy duties, a stranger to the peace and joys of the faithful, a profaner of thy sabbath, or a despiser of those opportunities for secret devotion, by which alone my soul can be kept alive to God, and grace obtained to withstand sin.

If riches increase, grant that in the same proportion my hand may be liberal to the poor and needy. Possess my mind, wherever I am, whatever I do, with a sense of thy presence, as a God that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, that thou mayest give to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings; that so I may never be surprised in the hurry of business, or seduced by a notion of concealing the fraud, to act with deceit and lies.

Lord, hear my prayer, and keep me, so that neither the cares, nor the pleasures of this world, nor the deceitfulness of riches, nor the lusting after other things, may ever prevail against me, to make me a dishonour to my Christian profession, and to sell my soul for that which perishes in the using. Hear me, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake, who died to deliver us from the power of this present evil world, and to choose unto himself a peculiar people, who should not be of the spirit and temper of this world, even as he was not of the world. To him, with thyself, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

XXVII. A Prayer proper for a Person in Trade, upon sustaining some great Loss.

O LORD, thou makest rich, and thou makest poor, exercising an absolute and most righteous sovereignty over the substance and circumstances, as well as over the persons of thy creatures. O forgive my sins, which have provoked thy displeasure. Have compassion upon my weakness, and repress the multitude of evil thoughts which are pressing upon my mind from every side. Banish all gloomy distrustful apprehensions from my mind. Teach me how to be abased; and if it seem good in thy sight to call me to such a severe trial, how to be in want. Give me understanding to learn more effectually from this provi-

dence how transient and uncertain are the riches of this world! and now more than ever, let it be my chief aim to grow rich towards God: to lay up my treasure there where it can never be lost, and to choose that good part which shall never be taken from me.

O Lord, preserve me from desponding thoughts, though this great misfortune is come upon me. Suffer me not, through any apprehensions of my afflicted mind, so to limit thy power, as if thou couldest not extricate me out of all my present difficulties, in a way which I cannot foresee; or as if thy bounty were not able to supply me, because the means of my provision are at this time taken from me. In opposition to my own self-tormenting thoughts, and to the malice of Satan, who waits to turn them to my ruin, convince me by thy Spirit that if I lead a godly life, I shall want no manner of thing that is good. Thou art able to retrieve all my loss; and after thou hast proved and tried my heart, to bless my last days with more abundance than my first: or thou canst give me more satisfaction and peace in a reduced condition, than I enjoyed in greater affluence. O let these thoughts quiet my mind, and make me cheerfully submit to thy disposal. Let thy faithfulness, truth, and promise be my heritage, and be trusted in as a sufficient portion.

And as thou, O God, knowest my frame, and all the finest springs of my nature, let not the sight of my children or family overpower me. Let not my heart be torn with anguish, as if they must be destitute and forsaken. Say unto me, Be of good cheer, leave your children unto me, I will preserve them alive,

and put thou thy trust in the Lord. O let my faith rest upon thy word, that thou who hast graciously given them life, wilt provide proper sustenance for it. Prepare me, I beseech thee, O God, for whatever farther trials I shall be called to go through, and make me ready even to lose my life, rather than to take any unlawful methods for relief in my distress. Thus, O Lord, desiring to esteem my present affliction a mark of thy favour towards me, (though my nature is apt to be offended with it) I commend myself and my imperfect petitions unto thee through thy beloved Son. Amen.

XXVIII. A Prayer proper for a Person when Affairs of great Importance to him are in Suspense.

O LORD, thou God of wisdom and of might, who hast most graciously commanded us poor short-sighted creatures to commit our works unto thee, and promised that our thoughts shall be established; who hast required us to cast all our care upon thee, assuring us thou carest for us: mercifully receive my prayer which I now make unto thee. So doubtful and wavering is my mind what course to take, that my eyes are fixed upon thee as my only counsellor. Teach me, I beseech thee, what I ought to do, and enable me to choose what upon the whole will most conduce to thy glory and my good. All things, I know, in heaven

and earth are ordered and governed by thee, according to the counsel of thy own will, and by a special providence thou makest all things work together for good to them that love thee.

Endue my soul, O Lord, with such love to thee, through a knowledge of Jesus Christ, that I may repose myself on thee, and wait without anxiety of mind the event of the matter I have in hand. If the issue be prosperous to me with respect to this world, give me grace to ascribe it wholly to thy undeserved mercy, and to retain a grateful sense of it all the days of my life. But if it seemeth good to thee to turn it into adversity, O grant me sufficient strength to behave aright under thy correction; in my affliction to put my whole trust in thy mercy; and so to exercise myself in submission and humility, in faith and patience, that the prosperity of my soul may be promoted by the continuance and weight of my troubles; and may I be finally able to say, Thou, O God, of very faithfulness, hast caused me to be afflicted. Hear me, O thou God of peace, patience, and consolation, whose kingdom ruleth over all, whose dominion is from generation to generation world without end, through Jesus Christ my Redeemer. Amen.

XXIX. A Prayer under the Pressure of some heavy Affliction.

O THOU most holy and righteous God, who orderest all things in heaven and in earth, and with the greatest tenderness dost hear the cries of all

who put their trust in thee, through Jesus Christ; I believe, Lord, help my unbelief, that in wisdom, mercy, and holiness thou dost appoint unto me every circumstance of my condition. I desire to look through all second causes to thee, O Lord God, who makest them merely instruments to do thy will, and execute thy purpose respecting the children of men.

O thou infinitely wise and gracious Governor of the world, often have I said, *Thy will be done.* But now thou art pleased to afflict me, I find my nature ready to shrink back, and to be clamorous or fretful under the sacred but painful cross. What I have often so solemnly repeated, I am strongly tempted to unsay, and to wish my own will, not thine, to take place. Make speed, O God of my salvation, and help me to deny myself, and to bow down in willing and full submission to thy appointment of my condition. Bring powerfully to my remembrance, I beseech thee, what my mouth hath so often declared in thy presence, that I have deserved all the plagues written in the book of thy law: and that it is mere mercy and rich grace which have kept me from the wages due to my sin, from weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth in torment. While thou art therefore smiting me, give me an heart unfeignedly to adore thy mercy, that instead of the scourge with which I am now corrected for my profit, thou hast not long since given a commission to the sword of vengeance to destroy me.

O fill my soul with a perfect acquiescence under this affliction, by convincing me that thou, and thou alone, knowest what manner of correction I need. Thy eye discovers the folly, the perverseness, and many sinful disorders of my soul, and thou canst alone adapt

a remedy to the disease. O that I might therefore obtain grace, to remain in meek subjection to the Father of spirits, and to bear the stroke of thy hand, not merely because none can oppose thy will, but because the stroke is given to heal and bless. Take away from me all the vain and impious thoughts that are so ready to press into my mind against this particular way in which I am tried. Make me to believe it is the very affliction proper for the particular state of my soul.

And, in the midst of my troubles, let thy comforts, O Lord, refresh my heart, and relieve the weariness and pains of nature, by the supernatural supports of thy grace and Spirit. Thy mercies are not restrained, neither is thy hand waxed short; what thou hast done for thousands of the sons and daughters of affliction, do for me, even for me, O my God. If my heart be less tender, less sensible, thou canst cure that evil, and make my present affliction the means of curing it. Thus, O Lord, let it be; and at length in thy due time, and in the way which thou shalt choose, send forth deliverance for me, and shew me thy marvellous loving-kindness; for I well know how dark soever this night of affliction seem, if thou sayest, Let there be light, there shall be light. O let me patiently wait and quietly hope, till that time of mercy come. Let me be much more concerned to have my affliction sanctified than removed.

Number me, O Lord, among the happy persons whom while thou chastenest, thou teachest out of thy law. Shew me, I beseech thee, wherefore thou contendest with me; and while I am passing through the

furnace of affliction, O let it purge away my dross, and take away all my iniquity. In thy presence and under the supports of thy grace, I can bear any thing, and am willing to bear, if I may grow more conformable to thy will, and more largely to partake of thy holiness. As my foolish heart is ready to grow fond of this earth, O let the disappointments and afflictions I meet with in it, loosen my affections, and put an end to all my sinful attachments to any thing below. O teach my soul to receive every trouble as a call to cease from expecting any thing from the creature, and to be preparing for that hour which shall put an end to all the sorrows and trials of the righteous, and give them an entrance into thy everlasting kingdom through the blood of the Lamb, in which they wash their robes white. O Lord, hear; O Lord, perform and do; defer not, I beseech thee, lest my spirit faint before thee, but answer me through Jesus Christ. Amen.

XXX. A Prayer to be used before the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper.

O MY God and Saviour, I own myself unworthy of the least of all thy mercies, yet in obedience to thy command I now purpose to appear with thy faithful people round thy table, which is prepared to set forth in the most lively manner to our minds the

exceeding riches of thy grace. I desire and entreat of thee power to approach it duly affected with a sense of my own vileness and of thy love.

I would come, O Lord, not trusting in any righteousness of my own, not having any conceit of any good thing being in me, but as a miserable sinner to the Saviour of the poor and needy; as one unholy and unclean to the never-ceasing Fountain of purity: I would come as an ignorant foolish creature to thee, the Sun of righteousness and Light of the world; as utterly destitute, to be supplied out of thy unsearchable riches, who art the Lord of the universe, and the Head over all things unto the church.

Thou, Lord, wast pleased to forgive the woman that was a sinner, to declare the contrite publican justified, to save the dying thief, and receive again the backsliding Peter. O shew the like mercy unto me a miserable sinner: make this ordinance effectual to open my understanding to know the nature and the efficacy of thy death on the cross; may it be a means of strengthening my weak faith to receive with much assurance the record which is given of thee. O that I may now behold with open face as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and know that my hope of salvation depends not on any thing uncertain or insufficient, but upon thy full, perfect sacrifice, accepted of the Father as a complete propitiation for the sins of all them that believe in thy name.

I believe, Lord, that thou art gone up on high, having led captivity captive. At this feast of love let me receive of the fruits and benefits of this glorious victory. O let it not be an empty memorial, a mere ceremony; but while I receive the outward and visible

sign, let my soul delightfully feel the inward and spiritual grace thereby signified; while my hand receives the bread and wine dispensed by the minister, let me by a true and living faith eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood; let me glory in the cross of Christ, and see that my life proceeds out of his death, and my salvation from his being made a curse for me on the tree.

O my Lord and my God! let thy power be present to heal my soul; and let virtue come forth from thee to arm me with the same mind, which was manifested in thy life and conversation when upon earth: so shall I offer unto thee with great gladness my thanks, and praise thee among much people, as God the Lord, by whom alone we sinners escape death. So shall I not only praise thee during my life upon earth, but glorify thee for ever among millions of angels in the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven. Amen.

XXXI. A Prayer before a Journey for a Person who is to travel by himself.

THINE is the power, O Lord, and the dominion in all places; both at home and abroad all our safety standeth in thy protection and mercy: to thee therefore do I now direct my prayer, being called from my own habitation. Many, I know, are the

dangers, both with respect to body and soul, to which travellers are exposed: and by his own strength or wisdom no man is able to avoid them. Compass me therefore about with thy favour, O God, as with a shield; guard both my person and my property from the sons of violence and blood; preserve my body in health and strength; and, as I shall be alone by the way, grant that I may reflect much on thy truth, thy grace, and salvation, and be able to say, I am not alone, but the Father, Son, and Spirit, by their sacred influences, are with me. Whatever company I come into, preserve me from complying with any solicitations to sin, and from being at all conformed to the manners of the profane. Endue me with knowledge and discretion that I may not, without cause, make myself a derision to the ungodly; nor for fear of the faces of men, do or say any thing to wound my own conscience, to grieve thy Spirit, and to lead the careless to think I am of the same disposition with themselves.

Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit. Suffer me not to look upon a woman with an impure eye. Let no presumption on the advantage of being unknown in any place where I come, seduce me to act in a manner I should be ashamed of among my friends and neighbours. Whatever business I have to transact, give me grace, O God, to do it with all good conscience, abhorring deceit, fraud, and lying.

For all these mercies I make my prayer unto thee, the God of my life, and in faith I commend myself into thy hands, beseeching thee that no evil may befall me. Nevertheless, if it be thy pleasure to ap-

point unto me in this journey any disaster, to permit me either to fall among thieves who shall rob me, or to break a limb, or to be visited with sickness, give me, I beseech thee, patience, faith, and comfort in the midst of my trouble, and full assurance that all things shall work together for good to them that love thee. And after all my travels here, bring me, O my heavenly Father, at last to the haven of everlasting rest, through the greatness of thy mercy to me in thy dear Son and my only Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

XXXII. A Thanksgiving after a safe Journey.

O MY most merciful and gracious God, I desire to take this first opportunity of returning my most hearty thanks for this fresh instance of thy love to me, manifested through my whole journey. Thou hast preserved me from every peril and sad accident to which I was exposed. Thou hast surrounded me with blessings on every side. I might now have been groaning under the pain of broken bones, of bruised limbs, or other terrible disasters; yea I might suddenly have been dashed in pieces on the ground, or have perished far from all help, and my friends and family shocked with the doleful tidings. But instead of these miseries thou hast kept me in safety: thou hast brought me to see my habitation in peace, and things here in prosperity. Every day thy mercy and goodness, O Lord, did prevent and follow me. O how unwearied

is thy bounty towards such polluted and depraved creatures as we are! And now grant, I beseech thee, that the sense of thy love to me may create in me such love for thy name, and for whatsoever thou dost command, that I may cheerfully and with full purpose of heart devote myself to thy service. Grant me both this, and every other blessing I need, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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TO THE BINDER.

Let the Title to Forms of Prayer, &c. face Page 472.

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